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Pentagon confirms deployment of active-duty military personnel in Ukraine

US Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder acknowledged during an official briefing yesterday that active-duty US military personnel are not only deployed inside of Ukraine, but are operating far away from the US embassy in Kiev.

The day before, an unnamed US Department of Defense official said at a background briefing that “U.S. personnel” had “resumed on-site inspections to assess weapon stocks” in Ukraine.

Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder Holds A Briefing

Reporting on this announcement, NBC News noted that “these inspectors in Ukraine appear to be some of the first members of the U.S. military to re-enter the Eastern European country since the start of the war, outside of military guards posted at the U.S. Embassy...”

During Tuesday’s on-camera briefing, Travis Tritten of military.com asked, “The military has personnel inside of Ukraine, who are doing weapons inspections now. I’m wondering what the rules of engagement for those personnel are if they are fired on by the Russians or they are targeted by the Russians.”

Ryder replied, “We do have small teams that are comprised of embassy personnel that are conducting some inspections of security assistance delivery at a variety of locations.”

“My understanding is that they would be well far away from any type of frontline actions, we are relying on the Ukrainians to do that, we are relying on other partners to do that.... They’re not going to be operating on the front lines.”

He continued, “We’ve been very clear there are no combat forces in Ukraine, no US forces conducting combat operations in Ukraine, these are personnel that are assigned to conduct security cooperation and assistance as part of the defense attaché office.”

To this, Tritten replied, “But this would be different because they would be working outside the embassy. I would just ask if people should read this as an escalation.”

Ryder claimed that the US action was not escalatory, and simply refused to answer Tritten’s question about what the US would do if any active-duty US troops were killed.

Especially over the past weeks, Russia has expanded its targeting of logistics sites throughout Ukraine, with weapons depots being a major target. What will be the consequence if these US troops, serving as liaisons for the coordination of logistics and weapons shipments, are targeted, including inadvertently, by Russia?

The fact that the massive funneling of arms into Ukraine by the US and NATO powers now requires the deployment of military personnel in Ukraine explodes the fiction that the US is not directly involved in the conflict, and is also revealing about the forces with which the US is allied.

To date, the United States has sent more than \$50 billion in military and economic assistance to Ukraine. Having financed and supplied the war, the US wants to make sure it has direct control over where the weapons have ended up and how they are being used. This is part of the conflict within the American political establishment in advance of the midterm elections.

The US military and State Department are also concerned that advanced weapons may end up in the hands of elements within Ukraine that may use them in a way that Washington has not approved beforehand.

The Pentagon’s statements followed the release of a report by the State Department on its plans to “Counter Illicit Diversion of Certain Advanced Conventional Weapons in Eastern Europe.”

The report referred to “a variety of criminal and non-state actors [who] may attempt to acquire weapons from sources in Ukraine during or following the conflict, as occurred after the Balkan Wars in the 1990s.”

“Criminal” actors, however, are embedded in the Ukrainian military, particularly in the form of the fascistic Azov Battalion, which is playing a frontline role in the war against Russia and whose leaders have been brought to Washington and feted by Congressmen, Democrat and Republican alike.

The open secret is that the actual US force presence in Ukraine is far greater even than that admitted by the Pentagon on Tuesday.

In October, veteran journalist James Risen reported that the Biden administration had authorized the clandestine deployment of US Special Forces in Ukraine. “Clandestine American operations inside Ukraine are now far more extensive than they were early in the war,” wrote Risen.

Secret U.S. operations inside Ukraine are being conducted under a presidential covert action finding, current and former officials said. The finding indicates that the president has quietly notified certain congressional leaders about the administration’s decision to conduct a broad program of clandestine operations inside the country. One former special forces officer said that Biden amended a preexisting finding, originally approved during the Obama administration, that was designed to counter malign foreign influence activities.

In July, the *New York Times* reported that dozens of US ex-military personnel are operating on the ground in Ukraine and that retired senior US officers are directing portions of the Ukrainian war effort from within the country.

US forces are intimately involved in all aspects of Ukrainian military operations, having helped provide intelligence for the strike that sunk the Moskva, the flagship of the Russian Black Sea fleet, in April, and for Ukrainian strikes that have killed Russian generals.

The announcement comes amidst a major escalation of the war over the past month. Following military setbacks in both Northern and Southern Ukraine, Russia has mobilized hundreds of thousands of reservists, annexed four regions of Ukraine, and threatened the use of nuclear weapons to defend them.

A series of major provocative actions targeting Russia have massively increased tensions, including the bombing of the Nord Stream gas pipelines, for which Russia has blamed the UK, as well as the assassination of Russian far-right ideologue Daria Dugina and the bombing of the Kerch Bridge, which the *New York Times* reported were carried out by Ukrainian forces.

Over the weekend, Ukraine carried out an attack on Russia’s Black Sea Fleet, the *Times* reported, which prompted Russia to withdraw from its grain agreement with Ukraine, threatening to escalate the global food crisis.

Under these conditions, forces within the US, including admiral James Stavridis, have renewed calls for more direct US intervention, including in the form of the dispatch of warships to the Black Sea.

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