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Drone attacks on Russian airbases: A major escalation in the war authored in Washington

Yesterday's drone attack on an airfield in Kursk marks a major escalation in NATO's war against Russia. It comes just one day after Russia accused Kiev of launching drone attacks on two military airfields deep inside its territory.

There were no casualties from the attack, 62 miles from the Ukrainian border. But a major fire erupted after oil tankers thought to have been hit burned for 10 hours and covered almost 5,500 square feet.



In this handout photo released by the administration of the Kursk region of Russia on Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2022, smoke rises from the area of Kursk airport outside Kursk, Russia. [AP Photo/Administration of the Kursk region of Russia via AP]

The location of the attacks and their implementation points once again to the direct involvement of the United States.

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Russian officials had already blamed Kiev for Monday's attacks on two airbases at Ryazan and Saratov in south-central Russia, believed to have involved modified Soviet-era Russian Strizh drones launched by Ukraine. Three service men were killed and four were wounded, with two aircraft damaged. The bombers hit at the Engels-2 airfield and Dyagilevo airbase were both nuclear-capable. Images from Dyagilevo show a nuclear-capable Tu-22M3 bomber with a damaged tail with a Kh-22 missile suspended under its wing.

Russia's defence ministry said that Monday's attacks were acts of terrorism and launched a bombardment of Ukraine's key infrastructure in response.

Suspected Ukrainian drones also attacked the Belbek military airport in Sevastopol, but were downed by air defences, while drones also unsuccessfully targeted a fuel store in Bryansk region according to Russian sources.

Bryansk, Kursk and Belgorod, which immediately border Ukraine, have all been hit multiple times. But the latest attacks and the targets chosen clearly involved extensive intelligence gathering and high-level collusion.

Ukrainian military analyst Serhiy Zgurets noted on the website of *Espresso TV* that the air force bases hit were the only facilities in Russia that could fully service bombers used to launch attacks on Ukraine. Ukraine's government declined to publicly acknowledge the strikes, but a senior Ukrainian official confirmed to the *New York Times* that at least one of the drones was launched from Ukraine and that one of the strikes was made with the help of special forces close to the Russian base.

These targets are the furthest in Russia ever hit during the entire conflict. One of the airbases, Ryazan, is just 115 miles southwest of Moscow, while Saratov is around 400 miles from the Ukrainian border. Russian military commentators stressed that if Ukraine could strike that far inside Russia, it may also be capable of hitting Moscow. *Sky News* Moscow correspondent Diana Magnay said there "are a lot of questions now about how exactly Ukraine managed it," before suggesting a "counter-intelligence failure within Russia that allowed a drone from within Russia, perhaps with the help of Ukrainian collaborators."

The channel reported off-the-record comments by senior Western officials boasting that such attacks inside Russia will have struck a powerful psychological blow that "does show" Ukrainian forces "can operate in Russia at will." Britain's Ministry of Defence said Russia was likely to consider the attacks to be "some of the most strategically significant failures of force protection since its invasion of Ukraine."

The *New York Times* gloated that the attacks “add to signs that Kyiv is willing to bring the war closer to Moscow and to President Vladimir V. Putin,” had “altered the geography of the war, shown failures in Moscow’s air defense systems and signaled Kyiv’s determination that Russia pay a heavier price for its unrelenting assault on Ukraine’s infrastructure.”

The ability of Ukraine to carry out such attacks would only be a mystery if Kiev were not able to rely on Washington’s spy network and its extensive contact within Russia built up over decades. This places the latest attacks among a growing number of Ukrainian “successes” and more covert provocations collectively designed to both prolong and escalate the war.

These include:

- The bombing of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, ending the transit of Russian natural gas under the Baltic Sea to Germany.
- The explosions in Sevastopol’s naval harbour on October 29, also apparently involving drones that partially destroyed a strategic bridge.
- The November 15 explosions in a Polish farming village that killed two civilians.

Every one of these actions reeks of covert US and NATO involvement, each more reckless and potentially dangerous than the last.

The Nord Stream bombings denied Russia vital revenues and confirmed its isolation from European markets after months of denunciations of Germany by the White House. The implications of Ukraine’s efforts to blame Russia for its own rocket attack on Poland, involving demands by Kiev to NATO to invoke Article 5 committing member states to mutual defence, were so grave that US President Joe Biden intervened to oppose what would have meant an immediate move to direct war with Russia for which the US was not yet prepared.

The latest attacks deep inside Russian territory could have been orchestrated by sections of the US military, intelligence and political elite pushing for such an outcome—no matter how potentially disastrous the outcome of such brinksmanship might be.

Commenting on the attacks, *The New York Times* wrote that there is “little room for Russia to escalate” in response. It quoted Mick Ryan, a retired Australian Army officer, who said of Ukraine’s attacks, “It is not, as some are sure to claim, an escalation. But it is a necessary political and military measure for Ukraine to limit the humanitarian harm of Russia’s brutal drone and missile attacks.”

This statement is absurd. Ukraine's attacks, coordinated with the United States, are a major escalation of the war. The United States, having instigated and provoked a war that has killed tens of thousands of Ukrainians, has crossed not only Russia's "red lines," but its own.

Every time the United States has claimed it would not do something in Ukraine, it has then gone ahead and done it.

In May, Biden published an op-ed in the *New York Times* entitled "What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine," in which he stated that "We are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders." But Washington has done precisely that, giving targeting information, weapons, and logistics support that have allowed Ukraine to attack deep inside Russian territory.

A pattern is emerging—one in which the US and NATO keep pushing against Russia in order to test how far they can go without provoking a response from the Putin regime.

There is clearly a calculation that putting ever greater economic, military and political pressure on Russia will exacerbate divisions among the oligarchs and open up the possibility of internal regime change through some form of palace coup. The assassination of Russian fascist ideologue Daria Dugina was a clear warning to Russia's oligarchs that the penalty for supporting Putin potentially goes beyond sanctions and seizure of assets. The intelligence used by Ukraine in its latest offensive could ultimately have originated from highly-placed Russian supporters with already existing connections to Washington, who are pushing for a settlement of the conflict at any price.

At the same time, there are forces within Russia's oligarchy that are pushing for a far more aggressive response by the Russian military.

The relentless and reckless escalation of the war by the United States carries with it the risk of the Russian government responding with a major escalation of its own, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

This Saturday, December 10, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality is holding an online meeting, "[For a mass movement of youth and students to stop the war in Ukraine!](#)"

The call for this meeting explains:

"The interaction of NATO's imperialist militarism, recklessly pursuing its global geopolitical agenda whatever the consequences, and the increasing desperation of Russia's oligarchic capitalist regime threatens to escalate into a nuclear conflagration.

“The hope that ‘reason will prevail’ and the war will soon be brought to a negotiated conclusion is a politically paralyzing and dangerous delusion. NATO does not want ‘peace.’ It wants war...

“War will be stopped not by appeals and protests directed to the ruling class and its governments, but through the political mobilization of the international working class.”

All readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* should make plans to attend the December 10 rally.

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