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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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27.02.2022

NATO mobilizes troops as UK MPs, US congressmen call for air war against Russia

Three days into the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the conflict is showing dangerous signs of spiraling into a much wider war.



Members of the 82nd Airborne Division of the U.S. Army prepare for deployment to Poland from Fort Bragg, N.C. on Monday, Feb. 14, 2022. They are among soldiers the Department of Defense is sending to Eastern Europe. (AP Photo/Nathan Posner)

As Russian forces entered the capital city of Kiev, Ukraine, the Ukrainian defense minister estimated that hundreds of Russian soldiers had died in the conflict so far. Ukraine has reported over 137 casualties, including civilians. A first attempt at holding talks between

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Kiev and Moscow failed on Friday. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has since appealed to Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett to mediate in the conflict.

On Friday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced the deployment, for the first time, of NATO's 40,000-troop-strong rapid response force, created in 2003.

"Yesterday, NATO Allies activated our defense plans," Stoltenberg said on Friday, adding that the alliance's forces would be positioned "on land, at sea, and in the air."

"The United States, Canada and European Allies have deployed thousands more troops to the eastern part of the Alliance," Stoltenberg continued. "We have over 100 jets at high alert operating in over 30 different locations. And over 120 ships from the High North to the Mediterranean. Including three strike carrier groups."

Stoltenberg added, "We speak about thousands of troops. We speak about air and maritime capabilities. They are only actually part of the standing naval groups. We have many planes operating in the eastern part of the Alliance. And then, several Allies have partly already assigned troops and forces to the NATO Response Force."

Stoltenberg called Russia's actions "the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades," declaring, "We will do whatever it takes to defend every ally and every inch of NATO territory."

The announcement was hailed by advocates of confrontation with Russia. "Hearing now that NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) has been activated. Excellent news," tweeted former US Ambassador to Russia and arch-warmonger Michael McFaul.

UK Defense Minister James Heappey announced that the UK would send armed forces to Estonia "earlier than planned," with the Royal Welsh battle group arriving in the country shortly. A further 1,000 UK troops will be on standby "to support Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Poland," Heappey said.

But the defense minister warned of the dangers of an open engagement between NATO and Russia, observing that the conflict could quickly become "existential."

Both in the UK and the US, significant forces within the political establishment are advocating for just such an “existential” conflict.

Heapey’s warnings were directed to MPs advocating for an establishment of a no-fly zone over Ukraine, meaning that NATO surface-to-air missiles and aircraft would engage and attempt to shoot down Russian combat planes.

The imposition of a no-fly zone “would be a significant and real help for the people of Ukraine,” said Tory MP Peter Bone.

In the United States, Congressman Adam Kinzinger demanded that the United States take this measure. “Declare a #NoFlyZone over Ukraine,” Kinzinger tweeted. “History teaches that taking a stand is inevitable and gets more costly with time. We own the skies, Russia cannot hold a candle to our Air power. Do this. Putin is too dangerous to hope he is satisfied with ‘just Ukraine.’”

The claim that the United States “own(s) the skies” in Eastern Europe is false. Russia operates what is arguably the world’s most advanced Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) system, which would inflict significant losses on NATO aircraft that sought to engage Russian air forces. If Moscow’s aircraft were to come under attack from sites within NATO territory, Russia could respond with cruise missile strikes on the batteries, triggering NATO Article 5 and starting a world war.

This insane demand won support on both sides of the aisle, with Democratic Party operative Jon Cooper demanding, “The U.S. must declare a no-fly zone in Ukraine—NOW!!”

In an exchange on BBC’s Radio 4 Today, UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said that the imposition of a no-fly zone would be an act of war against Russia.

“To do a no-fly zone I would have to put British fighter jets against Russian; NATO would have to declare war on Russia.” This would “trigger a European war,” he said.

Any such war threatens the use of nuclear weapons. As CNN military analyst James “Spider” Marks said on live television Thursday, “I would hate to think that [Vladimir

Putin] might think that he can get away with a tactical nuke, and that there wouldn't be a concomitant response. That then begins the cascading effect of the end of times.”

On Thursday, US President Joe Biden said that 7,000 US troops would deploy to Germany. But the Pentagon clarified that some of them could be forward deployed to Russia's borders as part of a NATO rapid response force.

Military.com reported, “The U.S. has already deployed about 12,000 troops and equipment such as F-35 Lightning II fighter jets and Apache attack helicopters to Germany, Poland, Romania and the Baltic states. The Pentagon has said more than 11,000 troops have been put on heightened alert for deployment since January, but it could not provide exact figures on Friday of those who remain on alert or have been deployed.”

These developments come as further measures have been taken to shut the Russian population off from the world economy. On Friday, Poland closed its airspace to Russian airlines, while British Airways and Virgin Atlantic have stopped using Russian airspace, *Kommersant* reported. S&P just downgraded the credit ratings of both Ukraine and Russia.

On Friday, California Democrat Eric Swalwell said that “kicking every Russian student out of the United States ... should ... be on the table.”

While the United States and NATO governments hope to benefit, for both domestic and geopolitical reasons, from a Russian invasion of Ukraine, the war threatens to have massive and incalculable consequences not only for the populations of that region but for all of humanity.

As the International Committee of the Fourth International said in its statement yesterday, the opposition among the people of Ukraine, Russia, and the whole world must “be developed as a conscious political movement for socialism. This means the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality Parties in every country.”

World Socialist 26.02.2022

