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Does Washington want war with Russia?

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Does Washington want a war with Russia? A review of recent US actions surrounding the crisis in Ukraine clearly poses what would have once seemed an unthinkable question. The Obama administration is playing a very dangerous game of Russian Roulette.

In the last 48 hours, the Pentagon has announced the deployment of US paratrooper units to Poland and the three former Baltic republics of the Soviet Union—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—bringing US troops to Russia’s very border. Another American warship has been dispatched to the Black Sea and more US forces are slated to deploy to Ukraine itself this summer under an exercise known as Operation Rapid Trident.

These military moves by Washington are unfolding in the context of an acute crisis within Ukraine that, thanks to the machinations of Washington and its puppets, threatens to erupt into full-blown civil war.

Less than one week after signing a joint statement with Russia, the US and the European Union in Geneva pledging to end all violence in Ukraine and disarm illegal groups, the US puppet regime in Kiev has ordered its military to carry out an “anti-terrorist” crackdown against the restive Russian-speaking population in the country’s industrial southeast. To that end it has

dispatched not only troops, tanks and warplanes, but also armed thugs from the neo-fascist Right Sector.

The Putin government in Moscow, which has desperately searched for an accommodation with Washington, appears to be waking up to the deadly seriousness of the situation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned in an English-language interview with the state-run RT television channel Wednesday that his government would treat an attack on Russian citizens in Ukraine as an attack on Russia itself. He raised as a precedent the August 2008 offensive launched by the government of Georgia on Russians in South Ossetia, to which Russia responded by intervening militarily to repel Georgian forces.

The implication that the Russian government would carry out a similar intervention to stop Ukrainian troops from slaughtering Russian-speaking civilians in the Donbas region should be treated with the utmost seriousness.

In the interview, Lavrov also observed, referring to the actions of the government in Kiev, that “the Americans are running the show in a very close way.” This is indisputable. The regime itself is the product of a protracted American intervention in the country’s internal affairs, with some \$5 billion in so-called “democracy promotion” funding pumped into Ukraine since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

These efforts culminated in the fomenting of a right-wing opposition movement to destabilize the Russian-aligned government of President Viktor Yanukovich by means of street violence. When a deal was brokered between the opposition and Yanukovich, Washington ensured that it was scuttled and the elected president overthrown by fascist paramilitary forces.

The prime minister of the regime brought to power by the February 22 fascist-led coup, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, was handpicked by US officials, who affectionately referred to him as “Yats.”

The point person for this operation has been US Undersecretary of State for Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland, a former chief security adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney and the wife of Robert Kagan, the founding chairman of the Project for a New American Century. She has brought to Ukraine and to Russia itself the same policy of aggressive war that was implemented in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The way in which Washington calls the shots has been demonstrated in an even more sinister fashion with the launching of the first abortive “counterterrorist” operation in the Donbas in the immediate aftermath of a covert trip to Kiev by CIA Director John Brennan, and then its resumption in the immediate aftermath of this week’s visit by Vice President Joseph Biden.

From start to finish, the Ukraine crisis has been instigated by US imperialism. Every action Washington has taken has been directed at exacerbating and intensifying this crisis. The longer

this crisis goes on, the clearer it becomes that US policy is directed not so much at Ukraine as at Russia itself. Ukraine, it would seem, is meant merely to provide the pretext for a war with Russia.

Short of that, it would be used to force a humiliating capitulation by Moscow that would only set the stage for redoubled aggression aimed at Russia's dismemberment and transformation into a powerless semi-colony.

Presumably, those in the White House and the Pentagon believe that such a conflict would stop short of a nuclear war, but who knows?

The threat of a US war on Russia is also apparent in the flood of war propaganda being unleashed upon the public. Vladimir Putin is being subjected to the same kind of demonization previously reserved for Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, while the State Department and its faithful scribes at the *New York Times* serve up "photographic evidence" of Russian troops in Ukraine that has all the authenticity of similar "proofs" of Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction."

What underlies the US war drive? In the run-up to the Ukraine crisis, Washington had grown increasingly incensed by Moscow's role in blocking US war plans against both Syria and Iran, not to mention Putin's granting of asylum to NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. Earlier, there was the fiasco that Moscow dealt Washington in the US-backed 2008 war launched by Georgia against South Ossetia. The events in Ukraine suggest that US imperialism has embarked on a strategy to eliminate Russia as an obstacle to its drive to assert hegemony over the Middle East and, more broadly, the landmass of Eurasia.

There are also internal factors driving Washington to war. Social contradictions within the United States have reached a dangerous intensity. Masses of working people continue to bear the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis, even as Wall Street recoups its losses from the 2008 collapse and grows richer than ever. More and more fingers are pointing at the super-rich as the party responsible for unprecedented social inequality and misery in America.

As so often in the past, war provides an external outlet for internal social pressures and the danger of domestic unrest. Under conditions of overwhelming popular hostility to military intervention, one thing is certain: a war with Russia would rapidly lead to the shredding of the Constitution, the abrogation of democratic rights, the outlawing of political opposition and a massive escalation of police state measures.

The greatest danger would be to underestimate the threat of war. Even if it is averted or postponed in the immediate instance, the profound contradictions of the imperialist system make the catastrophe of a nuclear Third World War not just a danger, but an inevitability, outside of the working class mobilizing its strength internationally in a unified movement to put an end to capitalism.

It is to prepare such a struggle that the International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* are holding an International May Day Online Rally on May 4. We urge workers and youth from every country to join in this common forum and discussion on forging the international revolutionary socialist movement that is so urgently needed. Register today at internationalmayday.org.