

War economy: Tanks, jets, missiles to Ukraine

written by Gary Wilson
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‘Today I am announcing that the United States will be sending 31 Abrams tanks to Ukraine,’ Joe Biden, Jan. 25, 2023.

Immediately after the United States and Germany announced that they were sending Abrams and Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine, [Politico reported](#) that the Pentagon is preparing to send F-16 fighter jets. “The campaign inside the Defense Department for fighter jets is gaining momentum,” the report says.

“Ukraine has identified a list of up to 50 pilots who are ready now to start training on the F-16,” says a Pentagon official. “Many of them have already trained with the U.S. military in major exercises before the invasion,” starting in 2014, Politico reports.

‘That’s called World War III’

Almost a year ago, in March 2022, [President Joe Biden said](#), “The idea that we’re going to send in offensive equipment and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews – just understand, don’t kid yourself, no matter what y’all say, that’s called World War III.”

Since that statement, the U.S. and NATO have steadily expanded operations in Ukraine, from anti-tank Javelins and portable air-defense systems such as Stingers, to HIMARS rocket launchers and, more recently, surface-to-air Patriot missiles, tanks, and armored vehicles.

On Jan. 24, the [New York Times headlined](#) the super-expansion of artillery production. “The Pentagon is racing to boost its production of artillery shells by 500% within two years, pushing conventional ammunition production to levels not seen since the Korean War ... The effort, which will involve expanding factories and bringing in new producers, is part of ‘the most aggressive modernization effort in nearly 40 years’ for the U.S. defense industrial base, according to an Army report.”

The Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles the Pentagon is sending can be equipped with depleted uranium ammunition. Depleted uranium is a byproduct of manufacturing nuclear weapons. The shells can punch through the thick armor of a tank and ignite everyone inside.

When asked if the Bradleys the U.S. is sending to Ukraine will be equipped with depleted uranium, a senior [Biden administration official](#) was slippery: “I’m not going to get into the technical specifics.” The official also declined to answer if the Abrams tanks will be equipped with a depleted uranium cage.

The long-term consequences for the people in Ukraine and Donbass are dire. Depleted uranium ammunition is radioactive, extremely toxic, and linked with a variety of birth defects, cancers, and other illnesses. In Iraq, doctors reported a spike in birth defects and cancers since the Gulf War, when the U.S. fired nearly a million depleted uranium rounds in the invasion of that country.

In 2022, Congress approved more than \$113 billion in U.S. “aid” to Ukraine. However, not one cent of that will feed, clothe or house anyone in Ukraine, though there is a great need for that. Every cent of that money goes to the Pentagon and its contractors and suppliers. Whatever gets to Ukraine is through the Pentagon.

Pentagon spending fuels inflation

The increased military spending is a source of inflation, pushing up prices across the economy.

Marx called military spending fictitious capital. It’s money put into circulation without any value (commodities that people need) being produced.

Arms manufacturers do not produce constant capital — that is, factories, machines, electronics, or any infrastructure for productive use. Nor do they produce consumer goods that meet human needs.

Armaments are the means of destruction, produced to destroy. Military spending does not go to expanding commodity production. Military spending actually contracts the capitalist market. Factories that normally produce commodities for profit are instead producing the means of destruction — no use values — so there's no profit, no surplus value in Marxist terms.

This is a source of inflation in the economy.

When the government buys bombs, tanks, jets, missiles, and destroyers and purchases the labor power of soldiers, it does not produce surplus value. It lines the pocketbooks of the military-industrial complex. The use value of the military-industrial complex's commodities is not that it increases wealth for society but instead that it destroys wealth as well as human lives.

'A war against Russia'

[Since the beginning](#) of the [U.S.-NATO proxy war in Ukraine](#) in 2014, the White House has maintained that it's not a war on Russia. But those are not the words they use in their private conversations, especially inside NATO.

On Jan. 25, [German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock](#) bluntly said what they've been saying privately – that NATO is fighting a war against Russia.

Baerbock said: “Yes, we have to do more also on tanks. But the most important and the crucial part is that we do it together and that we do not do the blame game in Europe, because we are fighting a war against Russia and not against each other.”

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova responded that this is more proof that NATO was planning a war on Russia all along.

“If we add this to Merkel's revelations that they were strengthening Ukraine and did not count on the Minsk agreements, then we are talking about a war against Russia

that was planned in advance. Don't say later that we didn't warn you," Zakharova said.

Russia is not an imperialist power

[Russia is not an imperialist power](#), economically or politically. Russia is mainly an exporter of raw materials — crude oil, natural gas, and grains.

In 2022, U.S. military spending was \$828 billion. Add to that NATO's \$324 billion. Compare that to Russia's military spending of \$65.9 billion, according to the [Costs of War](#) project at Brown University.

Russia's total defense expenditure is only about half of what Congress authorized for the U.S. war effort in Ukraine.

Russia is not one of the historic imperialist powers — the U.S., Britain, Germany, France, and Japan. Originally called the Group of Five, now, with the addition of Canada and Italy, they call themselves the G7. Nevertheless, they are still the imperialist dominators.

