

## **Could Ukraine Crisis Escalate to Nuclear War?**

Written by John Hallam

Thursday, 09 December 2021 15:49 - Last Updated Saturday, 18 December 2021 20:34

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### **PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

<http://www.pndnsw.org.au/>

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### **COULD UKRAINE CRISIS ESCALATE TO NUCLEAR WAR?**

#### **MAYBE, MAYBE NOT. DO WE WANT TO FIND OUT?**

There is at least a possibility, however small (and it may not be small at all) that the current crisis over Ukraine, in which up to 175,000 Russian troops have massed not far from Ukraine's borders, could escalate into nuclear war. Whether or not that takes place depends on a number of factors: Massive involvement by NATO and/or the US would make it more likely to do so. Foolish and escalatory comments by leaders on either side, leading to alerting and/or deployment of nuclear weapons systems could do so. Miscalculation, or malfunction or mistake on either side could set off an escalatory sequence.

NATO exercises with nuclear capable forces in recent years have not helped matters. Nor have Russian accusations (Maybe not without foundation) that NATO forces have practiced nuclear bombing runs against Russia.

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<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/moscow-says-us-rehearsed-nuclear-strike-against-russia-in-november-report-101637688011310.html>

The UK defence minister Baroness Goldie commented that nuclear war with Russia would be a 'very unwelcome outcome'.

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/goldie-ukraine-russia-boris-johnson-vladimir-putin-b969019.html>

The comment provoked wry (presumably also, nervous) laughter in Parliament.

More enthusiastic about the prospect of nuclear war has been the GOP senator who is number two in the US senate strategic forces subcommittee, Roger Wicker, together with Jim Inhofe, <https://www.newsweek.com/gop-senators-roger-wicker-jim-inhofe-pitch-nuclear-threat-arming-ukraine-against-russia-1657126>

who suggest that the US should be more prepared to involve itself massively in ground fighting, and should be prepared to use nuclear weapons.

According to an unidentified 'intelligence source'

<https://www.miragenews.com/us-mulling-nuclear-deployment-in-ukraine-to-688776/>

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“Deploying U.S. nuclear weapons in Ukraine as [deployed] on Turkish soil in 1959 to deter Soviet aggression is among the last-resort options being considered. This would make [invasion] “very, very difficult” for Russia as President Biden put it. However, this would not be a decision to take lightly.”

A further source of concern must revolve around Russian Iskander missiles with an approx 500Km range stationed in Kaliningrad. Any military threat – e.g. by NATO – to Kaliningrad – could result in their use, on a 'use them or lose them' basis, devastating central and eastern Europe.

These should send shivers up the spine, and should be on the front page – literal or cyber – of every news source. Instead they are the domain of nuclear policy 'wonks'.

Sources of comfort such as it is are that President Biden has limited US responses to 'tough' sanctions (which may or may not have any effect whatsoever), and ruled out intervention by ground troops. It is also being made known that active NATO involvement is unlikely – for the very reasons this press release canvasses.

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Russian actions seem on the face of it over-the-top, and certainly do not indicate superior wisdom or strategy. Indeed they are likely to provoke exactly the opposite actions to those they are intended to produce. They will push Ukraine (or what is left of Ukraine after it has been partially dismembered) away from Russia and toward NATO, exactly the result Russia was trying to prevent. However Russia certainly has legitimate grievances notably that back in 1990 it was promised repeatedly that NATO would not expand eastwards, and NATO is now expanding eastwards. NATO DOES conduct provocative military exercises within very close proximity to Russian borders. This does not excuse but it does help to explain, Russian actions.

The need of the hour is anything that takes the temperature down and makes military action – by anyone – less likely.

An agreement to abide by the Minsk accords would be helpful.

Continuing discussions ('Jaw Jaw is better than war war') would be helpful.

Gung-Ho comments on the need for military 'toughness' and the need to be prepared for the apocalypse are likely to ignite that very apocalypse.

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Above all what is required is common or garden goodwill and commonsense.

While he as vice-president, Biden expressed support for a policy of 'No First Use'. Such a policy would effectively take these concerns over the possibility of a civilisation-destroying nuclear exchange off the table. It should be implemented.

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