

Is Biden Risking NUCLEAR WAR With Russia?

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Earlier today, the Biden administration announced another step that it had never been willing to take in Ukraine, despite pressure that now on Biden's way out he's supposed to be a lame duck. He's going to leave Trump with, I believe, the intention of a war that escalates and becomes much more difficult to resolve. A promise that Trump campaigned on and won on has been ending the war in Ukraine. They're making it almost more difficult, if not impossible, for him to do so. Here from CNN: *Biden administration approves sending anti-personnel mines to Ukraine in another major policy shift.* Quote, "The decision comes just days after the US gave Ukraine permission to fire long-range U.S. missiles at targets in Russia, a shift that only occurred after months of lobbying from Kyiv. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin told reporters on Wednesday that the decision was motivated by Russia's changing tactics on the front lines. Quote, 'Because the Russians have been so unsuccessful in the way that they have been fighting, they've kind of changed their tactics a bit,' Austin told reporters. 'They don't lead with their mechanized forces anymore. They lead with dismounted forces who are able to close and do things to kind of pave the way for mechanized forces,' he explained. Austin said Ukraine's military needs, quote, 'things that can help slow down that effort.'" Now, first of all, the idea that the Russian tactics have been unsuccessful is the kind of dishonest war propaganda that you should expect comes out of the mouths of senior national security officials whenever they talk about wars they want. The Russians have been extremely successful. You can just look at the front lines and compare them over the last couple of months and you will see it moving steadily westward toward Kyiv. Ukrainian front lines have collapsed. No one in Europe or Ukraine believes any longer that a Ukrainian victory is possible and the US government doesn't believe this as well. What he's really saying there is that the Russians had been using tanks primarily and other mechanized equipment to march through the front lines, but now they're using personnel, just soldiers on foot. And as a result, he said, these deadly personnel, anti-personnel mines, where you just sprinkle mines all over the place in Ukraine in the hope that some Russian soldier will just walk into one and it will explode – that's now the tactic that they're sending there.

One of the many problems with this, aside from the fact that it's another US escalation, a major policy shift on the way out – Biden's supposed to be a lame duck when Trump's coming in, in exactly two months – is that these weapons are uniquely horrifying and dangerous because the ones that aren't detonated remain there. It's extremely difficult to clear them. And they stay there for as long as someone runs into them, long after the war is over. Some Ukrainian kids are playing, Ukrainian teenagers are walking around. They see it. They don't know what it is. They pick it up. And that has happened continuously over decades. Here from The New York Times: Quote, *What Are Anti-Personnel Mines?* Quote, "For centuries, militaries around the world have relied on landmines as a lethal and cost effective way to defend territory. Once in place, many of them can stay armed and deadly indefinitely. For that reason, human rights groups say they pose a grave and indiscriminate threat to civilians for years or decades after a conflict has ended. Anti-personnel mines are small, explosive weapons designed to detonate when a person steps on them or comes close to them. According to Mine Action Review, a non-profit that monitors the use of these weapons, mines have been used since the American Civil War. They were used heavily during World War Two, and American forces routinely employed them during the Korean and Vietnam wars. According to government records, the US military last used anti-personnel mines widely during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. In 2022, landmines killed 1,661 people and injured just over 3000, according to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Civilians made up 85% of those casualties, half of whom are children. Syria had the highest number of injuries and deaths, followed by Ukraine, Yemen and Myanmar. Other land mines are commonly known as, quote, 'persistent mines', meaning they can stay armed and lethal for many years. They use mechanical fuses that enable the mine to explode as long as its internal mechanism stays intact. In the 1970s, the US military developed a newer type of anti-personnel mine which it calls non persistent, which incorporates electronics that allow the device to self-destruct after a preset amount of time. However, those safety mechanisms sometimes fail." Now, just to give you a sense for the risks and the dangers that we're trifling with here – the US is now not just giving weapons to Ukraine with the expressed intent to have them shoot missiles deep inside Russia, kill people on Russian territory... Imagine if China, Iran or Russia gave weapons to Cuba or Mexico or Venezuela and said: these are being given to you with the expressed intent that you use these missiles to bomb targets inside the United States and kill people – the US would obviously consider that a grievous act of war. Not just by the countries that are shooting the missiles, but by the countries that are furnishing them with that intent. What the US is doing is so much worse. They're not just providing weapons to Ukraine. They're actively participating in their usage because the Ukrainians are incapable of guiding those weapons on their own. And as a result, everyone understands and expects that even if he doesn't want to, Putin is basically forced to retaliate because people in his country won't stand for non-retaliation, given that the United States is bombing their country.

And here's a little bit of the environment that has been created from The New York Times today. *US Pauses Operations at their Kiev Embassy, Warning of a "Significant Air Attack"*. "The United States embassy in Kiev issued an urgent warning on Wednesday morning that Russia may launch, quote, a 'significant air attack', closing the embassy and telling employees

to shelter in place. The warning came one day after Ukraine's military used American made ballistic missiles to strike into Russian territory for the first time, after receiving long-sought authorisation from President Biden to do so. The Kremlin had long warned that such strikes would be treated as an escalation and on Tuesday vowed to respond, quote, 'We will be taking this as a qualitatively new phase of the Western war against Russia,' Russia's foreign minister, Sergei V. Lavrov, said a news conference on Tuesday. Quote, 'And we will react accordingly'. Basically right now in order to avoid a catastrophic outcome, ironically the West is relying upon what they have long recognised is the rational self-interest and restraint of Vladimir Putin. The cautious party in this conflict has not been the West. It's been Putin. Putin has been extremely restrained in allowing all kinds of active Western involvement, NATO involvement, in the war against his country. And a lot of leaders, including American leaders, would have demanded that their government take much more aggressive action to retaliate against that. And Putin hasn't. But there's only so long that he can resist his own political pressures in Moscow. And what I find so extraordinary about all of this. Is that it genuinely seems as though D.C. elites, foreign policy elites have convinced themselves – I don't know why – that the risk of nuclear war is zero, that it's a joke. It's laughable. It's not even something we need to concern ourselves with.

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union were constantly involved in all sorts of proxy conflicts. It was the top priority of the United States and Russia, to avoid ever having direct military contact between the United States and Russia, the Soviet Union. Precisely because they knew how dangerous that could be. Not just because there might be a psychotic leader who wants to end the world just through misperception, miscommunication, paranoia, leaders getting very afraid of what is happening to their country. Everyone understood that the risk of nuclear war was so high, and that's why the United States and the Russians constantly spoke to one another, cooperated, coordinated, and made sure that they weren't ever getting into a situation where a nuclear exchange was possible. And despite all of that – and at the same time, culturally and socially, the danger of nuclear war was very central to American political and cultural life. Young American students were trained continuously how to hide in bunkers, how to listen for warnings and sirens in the event of a nuclear exchange. It was on the minds of everybody. Especially because in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, we were only a couple of decades away from the actual use of nuclear weapons by the United States and Japan. And as Trump himself has often warned, these weapons have gotten far, far, far more destructive with each passing decade. And you can hear the fear in his voice when he talks about them. He obviously is briefed on them. He obviously understands what their impact is. And he has a very healthy fear of nuclear weapons. And yet no one else in Washington really seems to. From the start of the war in Ukraine, we had actual articles published in mainstream swampy foreign policy rags like The Atlantic saying, oh don't worry, even if there's a tactical nuclear war, it'll be fine, it won't be that destructive.

Here is a person who is the director of the John McCain Institute. Obviously, John McCain was one of the most reckless warmongers the United States has ever had. And obviously, the institute formed in his name professes a foreign policy in line with his ideology. And that is basically let's go to war with everybody and not worry about it. Her name is Evelyn Farkas. I

believe she ran for Congress, a Democrat, and lost and now she has this position. Here she is on CNN, essentially saying why you should just laugh anytime you find yourself concerned about the risk of escalation to nuclear weapons. Here's what she said.

Evelyn Farkas: Anytime the Russian president threatens use of nuclear weapons, it means he's scared because that is just like his fallback when he's very nervous.

GG: Just like, oh, the more the Russians threaten the use of nuclear weapons, the more secure you should be, because it's just a sign of how nervous Putin is. I personally don't think it's a good thing to make the leadership of the country with the largest and deadliest nuclear stockpile on the planet nervous. That seems like a bad objective to have. It is even more foolish to be so cavalier about the possibility of nuclear exchanges when the Russians are feeling besieged. And now you have NATO guiding missiles into their country to explode and kill their soldiers and citizens. What are we relying on in terms of Putin? We're constantly told he's like this psychotic Hitler figure. And yet the entire policy is predicated on a belief that he's incredibly rational and restrained and won't do foolish things, no matter how foolish the United States and NATO behave. Note that propagandistic contrast.

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