



Russia's shocking answer to Anglo-American escalation in Ukraine war

By Rachel Douglas

On 21 November six sets of six columns of light appeared in the early morning sky over Dnipro, Ukraine, descending fast before disappearing, one after another, into the city's large industrial district. No large above-ground explosions were video-recorded, but loud booms reportedly sounded for some time after the strike.

Claims quickly appeared in social media and from Ukrainian officials that Russia had fired an ICBM, an intercontinental ballistic missile designed for a strategic nuclear weapons strike across the globe. The target was a giant defence industry complex on the Dnieper River in eastern Ukraine, known as Yuzhmash (Ukrainian "Pivdenmash"), the Southern Machine-building Plant. But it wasn't an ICBM.

The explanation came that evening from Russian President Vladimir Putin. In a televised address, Putin revealed that the strike had been in response to the use by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with assistance from the NATO-member countries who supplied them, of ballistic and cruise missiles—the American ATACMS and Anglo-French Storm Shadow/SCALP, respectively—capable of reaching 250-300 km into Russia. Following the US Government's sudden go-ahead (Washington Insider column, p. 9), ATACMS struck Bryansk Region on 19 November and Storm Shadows were used against a command point in Kursk Region the next day. Both areas are undisputed Russian territory. The Armed Forces of Ukraine invaded Kursk in August, in a gambit that has backfired in the form of horrendous casualties and losses both there and on the combat front in the Donbass region.

Putin said, "In response to the deployment of American and British long-range weapons, on 21 November the Russian Armed Forces delivered a combined strike on a facility within Ukraine's defence industrial complex. In field conditions, we also carried out tests of *one of Russia's latest medium-range missile systems—in this case, carrying a non-nuclear hypersonic ballistic missile that our engineers have named Oreshnik*. The tests were successful, achieving the intended objective of the launch. In the city of Dnepropetrovsk [Dnipro], Ukraine, one of the largest and most famous industrial complexes from the Soviet Union era, which continues to produce missiles and other armaments, was hit." (Emphasis added.)

Back on 12 September, as Ukraine's acting president Volodymyr Zelensky and his foreign patrons stepped up agitation for Washington to "grant permission" to use the ATACMS and Storm Shadows (which have US-made components) against targets deep inside Russia, Putin had warned: "[T]he Ukrainian army is incapable of using cutting-edge high-precision long-range systems supplied by the West ... without intelligence data from satellites which Ukraine does not have. ... [O]nly NATO military personnel can assign flight missions to these missile systems. ... Therefore, it is not a question of allowing the Ukrainian regime to strike Russia with these weapons. It is about deciding whether NATO countries become directly involved in the military conflict".

Now, on 21 November, Putin said that "From that point onward", referring to the previous two days' strikes, "the regional conflict in Ukraine provoked by the West has assumed elements of a global nature." The Russian president's



Warheads from Russia's hypersonic Oreshnik missile strike the Yuzhmash defence plant in Dnipro, Ukraine, 21 November. Nuclear weapons expert Prof. Steve Starr showed the same scene in video at an International Peace Coalition meeting on 22 November. Photo: Telegram social media

statement can be read in full here: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/75614>.

Putin included a message to US President-elect Donald Trump, saying, "We believe that the United States made a mistake by unilaterally destroying the INF [Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces] Treaty in 2019". That American decision occurred during Trump's first term. Putin said that Russia had then begun to develop this class of missiles in response to the USA's doing so. He added that "combat tests" of the Oreshnik ("Hazelnut") are a "response to NATO's aggressive actions against Russia", while their full deployment would "depend on the actions of the United States and its satellites".

He continued, "We will determine the targets during further tests of our advanced missile systems based on the threats to the security of the Russian Federation. We consider ourselves entitled to use our weapons against military facilities of those countries that allow use of their weapons against our facilities, and in case of an escalation of aggressive actions, we will respond decisively and in a mirror-like fashion."

The Oreshnik flies at Mach 10 (ten times the speed of sound), Putin said, making it impossible to intercept with existing missile defence systems. In a 22 November follow-up meeting with missile-designers and military officers, Putin revealed that the new missile has been assigned to Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) because, while it is being tested as a non-nuclear-armed weapon and is not an ICBM, "using it against enemy targets will be comparable in effect and power to using strategic weapons". He added that the Oreshnik is immediately going into mass production and that "several similar systems are currently being tested in Russia... a whole line of medium- and shorter-range systems." At this same meeting, Commander of the SMF Gen. Sergei Karakayev expanded on the capabilities of this "medium-range ballistic missile equipped with hypersonic non-nuclear warheads", noting that "it can hit targets across Europe" and can operate "both in non-nuclear and nuclear configurations".

The Oreshnik and how it came to be used

The missile fired at Yuzhmash was launched from Russia's Kapustin Yar test grounds in Astrakhan Region, east of Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) and near the border with Kazakhstan. It flew approximately 900 km to Dnipro, making it a

medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM, denoting top ranges of 1,000-3,000 km); the Russian classification “medium-range” covers both MRBMs and IRBMs (intermediate-range, 3000-5000 km). The Oreshnik is MIRVed—equipped with “multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles” (warheads).

In the 21 November test firing, the six warheads each contained six projectiles. They all reached the ground at hypersonic speed, penetrating deep into the subterranean workshops of Yuzhmash. The amount of damage done there, whether by the kinetic energy alone or with explosives in addition, is not publicly known. Yuzhmash, the Soviet Union’s main missile-manufacturing plant, was built during the Cold War with heavy fortification against nuclear-weapons attack.

Putin emphasised that the Oreshnik is not a knock-off of an existing ICBM or IRBM, but a new system with new technologies, albeit drawing on the legacy of Soviet military design bureaus. Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter, posting 23 November on his Substack site (<https://scottritter.substack.com>) under the headline “On the Brink”, outlined what is known so far about the technological “genealogy”, so to speak, of the Oreshnik missile, as well as the political-strategic lead-up, after Trump cancelled the INF Treaty in 2019, to its creation and first appearance. His analysis coincides with what Russian military experts have said in their own commentaries; shows that the deployment of such a weapon, while shocking, should not have been a surprise; and is recommended reading for an in-depth understanding of this development.

Even more in-depth background is available to AAS readers from our archive of articles published since 2014, in which we have shown that the fighting in Ukraine arose not from an “unprovoked” Russian invasion in 2022, as is routinely claimed by officials and the media in the NATO-dominated sector of the world, but from the commitment and deployments of the Anglo-American “party of war” to inflict “strategic defeat” on Russia, as well as China, because they insisted that the Anglo-American elite should be the sole superpower after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

A summary and timeline of how matters arrived at their current dangerous state is “Sleepwalking into nuclear World War III, 1990-2021” (AAS, 12 Jan. 2022), our edited and annotated version of a memorandum issued by the international Schiller Institute just two months before Russia sent its forces into Ukraine. It traces the rapid departure on the part of London and Washington from the pledge that “NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries”, contained in the documents that established a NATO-Russia Council and other consultative mechanisms in 1997. The timeline highlights the Western-sponsored “Orange Revolution” of 2004, the Anglo-American promotion of radical, anti-Russian nationalism in Ukraine in the 2000s, and the USA/UK/EU-backed overthrow of Ukraine’s elected President in 2014—the Euromaidan coup. The article contains hyperlinks to our other important background reports, on the 2014 coup; on Putin’s 2018 announcement of new weapons programs, including hypersonic missiles, as an asymmetrical response to the US-NATO attempt to enforce a one-empire world by negating the military capabilities of Russia and China; and on UK-led naval provocations in the Black Sea during 2021.

Other AAS articles important for the current showdown include these:

“RAND Corp., as MAD as ever, plots Russia’s downfall” (21 Oct. 2020) recounted the infamous nuclear war-gaming think tank’s document “Overextending and Unbalancing Russia”, a blueprint for how to “stress Russia’s military, economy, or the regime’s political standing at home and abroad”,

produced under contract for the US Army.

“NATO in Ukraine: What Moscow saw” (16 March 2022) is an account of Ukraine’s transformation into an armed NATO camp in 2014-22.

“Nuclear war danger escalates: Kiev, NATO’s catspaw, claims attack on Russian strategic radars” (29 May 2024).

Knowing this seemingly old history is crucial for any possibility of defusing the showdown in and around Ukraine through diplomacy. In his 31 October address to the Minsk International Conference on Eurasian Security, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov went out of his way to emphasise the coherence of Russia’s terms for any settlement of the Ukraine conflict, with Chinese President Xi Jinping’s principle of solving crises by eliminating their root causes.

The message to Europe

Two other events, which occurred two days before the Oreshnik strike on Dnipro, are relevant to the rising danger of all-out war between Russia and NATO.

On 19 November Putin signed a decree that approved the updated “Foundations of Russia’s State Policy in the Field of Nuclear Deterrence”. As we reported in October (“Facing conflict with NATO, Russia revises nuclear doctrine”, AAS, 2 Oct. 2024), a key new element formalised in the revised document is that an attack on Russia by a non-nuclear country with the participation of a nuclear power (for example, by Ukraine with weapons and targeting assistance provided by the UK and/or USA) will be treated as a joint attack by the two. It also affirms that Russia may use nuclear weapons upon reliable detection not only of a ballistic missile attack on Russia, as the previous guidance stated, but also a “massive launch” of other “air and space attack weapons and their crossing our state border”, such as “strategic and tactical aircraft, cruise missiles, UAVs [drones], hypersonic and other aircraft.” Thus the revisions significantly lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, at exactly the moment when the United States and NATO, acting through Ukraine, have escalated their military actions against Russia.

Also on 19 November, NATO formally took control of the US-built Aegis Ashore Missile Defence System in Redzikowo. Polish President Andrzej Duda and US Admiral Stuart B. Munsch attended the ceremony, marking the transfer of the Redzikowo station into NATO’s command and control structure. Ship-based Aegis anti-missile missiles are a program launched by the Bush-Cheney Administration after withdrawing from the ABM Treaty in 2002. “Aegis Ashore” brought these technologies to the base in Poland and one in Romania. The initial announced justification was to counter a supposed threat of missiles fired by Iran. In 2007 Putin proposed, in person, to President George W. Bush that the USA and Russia jointly develop missile defence against such an alleged threat, but talks about such an agreement bogged down and then were buried under the Obama Administration (2009-17).

Already in 2012, then-Deputy Chief of Staff (now Chief of Staff) Gen. Valery Gerasimov demonstrated at a Moscow security conference that the Redzikowo installation was a threat to Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent against US attack, because its missiles could intercept Russian retaliatory ICBMs in the boost phase. Moreover, Russian officials and many Western arms experts point out, the same “defensive” facility can launch ground-based Tomahawk cruise missiles—previously banned under the INF Treaty—at Moscow. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told the TASS news agency on 22 November, “Given the level of

Continued page 10



Will Biden presidency end in impeachment or removal for incompetence?

Special to the AAS

With less than two months left in his presidency and confronted with Donald Trump's victory, which was a mandate for ending the permanent wars the USA has pursued, Joe Biden has taken steps that bring the world to the brink of thermonuclear extinction. In the space of a few days, Biden made three decisions that amounted to an unconstitutional declaration of war against Russia. He gave the green light for Ukraine to use the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), with a range of up to 300 km, against targets inside Russia; he approved deployment of American military contractors to Ukraine to provide logistical support for US-supplied advanced weapons; and he approved the delivery of artillery-fired anti-personnel land mines to Kiev, a violation of the Anti-Personnel Mines Convention (Ottawa Convention) of 1997.

These announcements were either made by Administration officials, or, in the case of the ATACMS, the National Security Council, the Pentagon, and the State Department refused to confirm or deny the authorisation, leaving it to be leaked through the *New York Times*, and confirmed by European officials and by the Zelensky government's acting upon it.

The authorisation for deep strikes into Russian territory using US-provided ATACMS came while Biden was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, attending his final Group of 20 summit, held there on 18-19 November. His absence from Washington when the decision occurred, together with Biden's visibly dissociated state at the summit, raised questions about how much the President was involved in the decision—or any other vital decision—which was a reversal of his long-standing policy of avoiding an escalation into direct war on Russia.

Coverage in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Guardian* of Biden's behaviour highlighted his absence from the leaders' official photograph and other bizarre lapses of attention throughout the Brazil visit and his earlier attendance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Peru. The *Guardian* chided him as "No-show Joe".

Some American military scholars and even some members of Congress view Biden's approval of the long-range strikes into Russia with US-provided missiles, using US satellite guidance, as an unconstitutional action demanding sanction.

Representative Keith Self, a Texas Republican congressman who served as a nuclear weapons officer during his military career, wrote to Biden demanding a classified briefing for Congress on the new rules of engagement for US forces in the Ukraine war. Self gave Biden a 25 November deadline for briefing Congress, or else he would "immediately move for further oversight". The letter said: "I write to challenge your administration's decision to authorise Ukraine's use of Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) to strike inside Russia. Last September, Russian President Vladimir Putin changed Moscow's 'nuclear doctrine' to include 'the right to use nuclear weapons' in the event of 'a massive launch of means of aerospace attack', including 'strategic and tactical aircraft, as well as cruise missiles and drones,

hypersonic and other delivery vehicles.'

"The ill-timed decision to green-light the use of US-supplied ATACMS into Russian territory is counter-productive to President-elect Donald J. Trump's stated goal toward a negotiated peace. If this desperate move by your administration represents an attempt by deep-state operatives to hamstring the incoming Trump presidency, it's a dangerous miscalculation. I am very concerned that this miscalculation could have catastrophic results."

President-elect Trump's son Donald J. Trump Jr posted on social media, "The Military Industrial Complex seems to want to make sure they get World War 3 going before my father has a chance to create peace and save lives. Got a lock in those \$Trillions. Life be damned!!! Imbeciles!"

The 25th Amendment

The confluence of the ATACMS approval and Biden's visibly diminished capacities has prompted some calls for his impeachment, or removal from office under the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, which spells out the process for removing a President from office if he is no longer physically or mentally fit to govern.

On 21 November Gen. Michael Flynn, Trump's initial first-term National Security Advisor and a former head of the Defence Intelligence Agency, demanded both measures, in a post on X. "The current House of Representatives must impeach Biden for endangering the United States", wrote Flynn. "[Vice President] Harris should immediately invoke the 25th Amendment and remove Biden—he's sleepwalking us into WWII. Let's at least put constitutional pressure on Harris because Joe's poor memory makes him unaccountable."

Given the danger of a thermonuclear world war, Flynn urged incoming administration officials to reach out to Russian President Vladimir Putin to "de-escalate".

Professor Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois Law School has drafted and circulated three articles of impeachment against Biden, on the grounds that he is bringing the United States to war against Russia without Congressional authorisation and without even invoking the *War Powers Act*. Under Article I Section 8 of the Constitution, Congress has the exclusive authority to declare war.

The *War Powers Act*, passed by Congress after the Vietnam War, requires a President to give Congress a detailed account of any foreign military actions he orders, including an exit strategy, mission objectives, justifications, and budget.

On 19 November Representative Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican, called for Biden's impeachment for authorising the ATACMS use. In a posting on his X site, Massie wrote: "By authorising long range missiles to strike inside Russia, Biden is committing an unconstitutional Act of War that endangers the lives of all US citizens. This is an impeachable offense".

Why Now?

After insisting for the last 34 months that the United States will avoid any action that expands the Ukraine war into a direct conflict between Russia and NATO, Biden's

abrupt reversal after the Democratic Party's sweeping defeat in the 5 November elections raised questions not only about his mental capacities.

Why the reversal now?

Even before Biden lost the election, his Administration was moving frantically, along with NATO, to secure continuing military aid to Ukraine in the event that Trump won. The Biden Administration is rushing to spend US\$7 billion on additional military equipment for Ukraine out of US stocks (part of US\$60 billion in assistance authorised by Congress in April), fearing that Trump will cancel the aid and press for a settlement of the conflict.

It is now almost universally acknowledged that Ukraine has lost the war, as Russian forces advance across the Donbass front. Russia has destroyed or degraded 80 per cent of Ukraine's electricity grid as winter approaches, creating the prospect of power blackouts. The *New York Times* wrote, following Biden's ATACMS decision, that no Western military deliveries will alter the direction of the war. Ukraine's greatest shortfall is in manpower, for which there is no solution.

Biden's actions, therefore, are not directed at altering the outcome of the war. Other reasons cited in the media, such as the supposed imminent entry of North Korean forces into combat with the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in

the Kursk Region (undisputedly Russian territory, invaded by the AFU in August), are speculative.

But without a doubt, the outgoing Administration's actions have placed the world on the brink of nuclear war. As reported elsewhere in this issue, the Russian response—deploying a new, hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile as a demonstration of Russian capacity and finalising amendments to their nuclear weapons doctrine—is no bluff.

Nuclear weapons experts, from former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter to Dr Steven Starr of the University of Missouri, have detailed the threat posed by Biden's escalation, which was followed by similar green-lighting of long-range strikes into Russia by the United Kingdom and France, using their Storm Shadow/Scalp missiles. Dr Starr suggested that Russia faces the capability for close-range nuclear strikes from recently commissioned American anti-ballistic missile sites in Poland and Romania, which can launch Tomahawk cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. They will likely be primary targets of Russian strikes if NATO and the USA escalate further.

According to some military analysts, Biden has considered the option of approving Ukraine obtaining nuclear weapons, supposedly as a deterrent against Russia, which would further lower the threshold of nuclear war.

Russia's shocking answer to Anglo-American escalation in Ukraine war

From page 8

threats posed by such Western military facilities, the missile defence base in Poland has long been included among the priority targets for potential neutralisation. If necessary, this can be achieved using a wide range of advanced weaponry."

Regarding the use of the Storm Shadows and French approval of using its SCALP equivalent against Russia, Russian diplomat Mikhail Ulyanov warned, according to TASS, "France and the United Kingdom have decided to help Ukraine with the use of high-precision missiles and they will have to pay for that. Moscow will respond to the missile strikes on Russia."

On 23 November the Russian agency Sputnik published a list of more than 40 military bases in 17 NATO countries, from the UK and Finland down to Portugal, which could be reached by the Oreshnik hypersonic MRBM and to which the right "to use our weapons against military facilities of those countries that allow using their weapons against our facilities" might apply.

Are they listening?

Throughout the escalation of the NATO-Russia confrontation, the war party in NATO has pooh-poohed Russia's warnings and "red lines". "Putin is bluffing" has become a ritual mantra.

As this article goes to press on 26 November (European time), the Russian Ministry of Defence has revealed that there were additional ATACMS strikes against targets in Russia's Kursk Region on 23 and 25 November, days after the Oreshnik demonstration. "Retaliatory measures are being prepared", said the Ministry in a Telegram post.

How Trump's incoming team will deal with the spiral of escalation is not known, but hotheads on both sides of the Atlantic are fuelling the tension.

Speaking at a think tank event in Washington on 20 November spokesman for the US Strategic Command Admiral Thomas Buchanan claimed he was in favour of dialogue to avoid nuclear war, but blurted out that if a nuclear weapons exchange did occur, "we want to do it in terms that are most acceptable to the United States", so that the USA would have

enough weapons left to "deter future threats" and "continue leading globally". At an International Peace Coalition online meeting on 22 November, Scott Ritter warned that such a suggestion that nuclear war is survivable is a symptom of insanity.

The French daily *Le Monde* reports stepped-up discussions on deploying French and British troops to Ukraine.

In Ukraine itself, Zelensky is now demanding that NATO countries supply Kiev with Tomahawk cruise missiles (which Ukraine has no ability to fire) with which to attack Russia. The *Times* of London reported 13 November under the headline "Could Zelensky Use Nuclear Bombs? Ukraine's Options Explained", that a Kiev think tank has advised the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence it could rapidly create a plutonium-based atomic bomb by raiding Ukraine's nuclear energy plants to obtain fissile material.

The hardcore British war party, political parents of the US "neocons", remains insistent on escalation. Kit Klarenberg's new article in the *Grayzone* (reprinted in this issue, p. 11) on revelations about Project Alchemy, the plot by high-level British defence and intelligence officials to "keep Ukraine fighting" no matter what, demonstrates their fanaticism.

At the United Nations Security Council on 18 November, Russia's Permanent Representative Vasily Nebenzia blasted the British imperial mindset at a meeting called by the UK on the 1,000th day of Russia's Special Military Operation. He advised taking note of another date—15 November, which "marked exactly 950 days since the visit of former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to Kiev". That was when Johnson "dissuaded the head of the Kiev regime from signing the peace agreement with Russia that had already been initialled in Istanbul, which would have stopped hostilities" just 50 days in, and hundreds of thousands of deaths ago. Now, he warned, sudden talk about "freezing" the front line and revisiting settlement schemes from a decade ago, is a waste of time because "we no longer trust you, and we will only accept such a solution that will eradicate the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis and will not allow anything like this to happen again." (Full text at https://russiaun.ru/en/news/ukraine_181124.)

Leaks expose secret British military cell plotting to ‘keep Ukraine fighting’

By Kit Klarenberg, *The Grayzone*

Leaked files show top UK military figures conspired to carry out the Kerch bridge bombing, covertly train “Gladio”-style stay-behind forces in Ukraine, and groom the British public for a drop in living standards caused by the proxy war against Russia.

16 Nov.—Emails and internal documents reviewed by *The Grayzone* reveal details of a cabal of British military and intelligence veterans which plotted to escalate and prolong the Ukraine proxy war “at all costs”. Convened under the direction of the British Ministry of Defence in the immediate aftermath of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the cell referred to itself as Project Alchemy. As British leadership sabotaged peace talks between Kiev and Moscow, the cell put forward an array of plans “to keep Ukraine fighting” by imposing “strategic dilemmas, costs and frictions upon Russia”.

The leaks obtained by *The Grayzone* expose a hidden hand behind Britain’s policy in Ukraine, showing in unusually granular detail how it aimed to engineer a long, grinding war through covert operations that stretched the bounds of legality.

Project Alchemy’s proposed schemes spanned every conceivable field of warfare, from cyber attacks to “discreet operations” to outright terrorism. The secret cell even put forward a plan to “aggressively pursue” and “dismantle” independent media outlets—including *The Grayzone*—through an aggressive campaign of legal harassment and online censorship, so they “would be forced to close”. The incendiary blueprints were fed to the highest levels of the British state and national security structure, where they were apparently well-received.

Founded by a senior British Ministry of Defence official, Project Alchemy is composed of veteran military and intelligence operatives united by a desire for all-out war between the West and Russia. Some have trained Ukrainian forces in clandestine sabotage tactics.

Members of the national security cabal tacitly acknowledged that their proposed operations stretched the bounds of British law. Thus they suggested that London should be “prepared to creatively use the law” to meet its goals, and even be willing to erase “legal restrictions on UK deniable ops” against Russia.

Some of Project Alchemy’s most extreme recommendations have already been implemented, often with calamitous results. These include the cell’s proposal to strike Crimea’s Kerch Bridge, which prompted a Russian escalation that saw

punishing attacks on Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure. Alchemy also envisioned the construction of a secret, Gladio-style army of Ukrainian partisan fighters to carry out assassination, sabotage, and terror missions behind enemy lines.

It appears the British premier, Keir Starmer, fell under the influence of the Project Alchemy cabal soon after his election in July, when he eagerly embraced the role of “wartime prime minister”. After pledging to support Ukraine “as long as it takes”, however, Starmer is quietly backing away from the maximalist policy. In Kiev, Ukrainians are left to ponder how their “friends” in London got them into this mess, and why they cannot, or will not get them out of it.

The British spooks who gathered around Project Alchemy reasoned that the longer the proxy war continued, the more Russian president Vladimir Putin’s “credibility at home and abroad drops, and his ability to fight NATO is degraded”. Today, Project Alchemy’s gambit has clearly backfired, as Putin remains popular within Russia, while a crumbling Ukrainian army loses territory by the day despite constant re-arming by the West. But the war planners in London remain staunchly committed to escalation, refusing to shelve their diabolical proposals.

Britain takes ‘unilateral lead’ on ‘regime change’ in Russia

Project Alchemy was founded on the personal orders of Lt. General Charlie Stickland, who is charged with “planning, executing and integrating UK led joint and



Serial	Post	Rank/Grade	Last	First	Remarks	Cost
1	1 Mil Lead	Brig	Scott	Simon		
2	2 Civ Lead	n/a	Morris	Dom	No extra cost if mobilised	500
3	3 COS	Maj	Powell	Jonathan	Private Sector Coord	
4	4 Lead X-Gov Planner	SO1				
5	5 x-Gov planner	Capt	Smith	Ben		
6	6 Logistics	SO2				
7	7 Civ Humanitarian	n/a	Sawyer	Aleks		
8	8 Mil Humanitarian	SO2			Exp planning and delivering CIMIC Operations	
9	9 Info Ops	SO3			77X	
10	10 J2	SO2			Rus/ Ukr SME	
11	11 Info Ops	n/a	Lersten	Gus		500
12	12 Info Ops	n/a	Khan	Amil		500
13	13 Academic	n/a	Boff	Johnathan		500
14	14 Academic	n/a	Ledwidge	Frank		500
15	15 Academic	n/a	Johnson	Rob		500
16	16 Grand Strat	n/a	Fennell	James		500
17	17 X-Gov Results/ Campaign Change Management	n/a	Austin	Becky		500
18	18 Inter Agency Civilian Planner	n/a				500
Total Cost for 3 week						40500
				Requires trawl		
				Individual Identified but requires funding		
				Filled		

Previously, Khan participated in the UK Foreign Office's program to foment regime change in Syria.

Months after Alchemy put Khan forward as a member of its team, The Grayzone exposed him for plotting with celebrity-left journalist Paul Mason to destroy this publication. One leaked email showed Khan proposing a "full nuclear legal [attack] to squeeze [The Grayzone] financially". The newly uncovered documents indicate the decision to assail The Grayzone was met with

approval from the highest ranks of the British government.

multinational overseas military operations" as the head of Britain's Permanent Joint Headquarters. Stickland boasts in leaked communications that his family "come from a long line of pirates and buccaneers". In his email signature, the general identifies himself as an "LGBTQ+ Advocate" in rainbow-coloured text.

Stickland and his assistant, Maj. Ed Harris, did not answer The Grayzone's calls to their personal phones, nor did they respond to detailed questions submitted to them through WhatsApp.

Stickland convened the first meeting of Project Alchemy's on 26 February 2022, just days after Russian troops made their initial foray into Ukraine. According to minutes of the gathering, "an assortment of leading academics, authors, strategists, planners, pollsters, comms, data scientists and tech" was on hand to produce a "grand strategy options paper".

The paper consisted of a series of proposals for the British government to "defeat Putin in Ukraine and set the conditions for the reshaping of an open international order of the future". Throughout the document, the need to "keep Ukraine fighting" was described as London's "main effort" in the conflict.

In an email to British military apparatchiks dated 3 March 2022, Stickland described Alchemy's paper as the result of "some mischief I've been up to" with "a group of 'sideways thinkers'". He expressed satisfaction that "this has been seen by all sorts of people", including senior British government and military officials, "and landed well".

An Excel document listing potential and confirmed recruits for the effort, authored by project chief Dom Morris, names a number of individuals from the private sector and academia alongside high-ranking army officials. Currently a fellow at King's College's "Centre for Grand Strategy", Morris was listed in the document as a "civilian leader". The role of "military leader" was to be carried out by Simon Scott, a brigadier in the British army who was appointed an OBE in 2013 for his "gallant and distinguished services" in Afghanistan.

Information operations were to be headed by a still-to-be determined member of Britain's 77th Psychological Operations Brigade. Also listed as a participant in information operations was longtime British psychological warfare operative Amil Khan, founder of the "counter-disinformation" analysis firm Valent Projects.

In 2021, The Grayzone revealed how the then-Prince of Wales, now King Charles, enlisted Khan's Valent Projects to astroturf a pseudo-socialist YouTube influencer to attack sceptics of the government's ham-fisted response to Covid.

'Ukraine's Next Chapter—Elders Grand Strategy Options Paper'

Within Project Alchemy's covert war room, the obsession with a long war quickly took hold. Members of the cell took their cues from a policy paper Stickland attributed to "The Elders", which he described as "a group of Fusion players", referring to the strata of academics and defence industry figures with strong ties to the British military.

An Alchemy document composed under Stickland's watch and titled, "Ukraine's Next Chapter—Elders Grand Strategy Options Paper", suggests that members of the cabal had convinced themselves a "palace coup" inside the Kremlin was inevitable. So long as Russia struggled inside Ukraine, they believed, British intelligence would be granted "the opportunity to challenge" Moscow's ever-growing "stature as a competent international actor" on the world stage.

"A long war against a small state makes [Putin] look a fool", the Alchemy paper asserted. "He is obsessed by the end of Ghaddafi—he will want to avoid that.... Pressure will pile on from oligarchs as a long war drags on—he will not want to give them excuses to threaten his authority." The group reasoned that "a long war will affect [Putin's] international credibility", as "a failure to quickly defeat Ukraine will seriously ... reduce his credibility with new rich friends in Belarus, Hungary, China, India, Middle East, Brazil etc.

"Most importantly", protracted Russian involvement in Ukraine "will embolden NATO", Alchemy argued. Convinced that Putin would fail in the eastern Donbass region, triggering a collapse of his government, Project Alchemy members openly fantasised about absorbing Russia into the Western-dominated financial order afterwards under the guise of a "Post Putin Marshall Plan". Of particular interest was London's "re-engagement" with Moscow "in global energy and commodity markets", a seeming reference to the West's desire for cheap Russian gas and wheat.

'Discreet operations': reviving 'Operation Gladio' terror ops in Ukraine

To accomplish the balkanization of Russia, Project Alchemy's plotters took inspiration from Operation Gladio, a CIA and NATO-orchestrated covert operation that saw fascist paramilitaries carry out false-flag terrorist attacks across Western Europe after World War II in a bid to prevent communism from taking root.

A section detailing potential "discreet operations" in Alchemy's strategy paper, which stressed the "need to

6. **Discreet Operations.** Need to intervene in every way except 'official'.
 - Revisit legal restrictions on UK deniable ops. Greater resources required for UK discreet ops.
 - Campaign coordination and control mechanisms required XHMG (
 - Use PMCs to out Wagner, Wagner.
 - Urgent - A new doctrine, operating concept, and legal framework, for effectively integrating the activities of PMC's and other non-mil actors .
 - Supply lethal defence equipment now
 - Train and equip units for UKR in UK
 - Equipment capabilities - Fighters and MI35 gunships
 - Recruitment and deployment of Javelin/NLAW training and mentoring teams
 - Protect key UKR people
 - Logs have hit the 72-hour point - Catalyse campaign against RUS logistical tail
 - Info Ops - Directly to RU forces in UKR: to UKR forces of their successes
 - Support UKR to ID & retake/hold key geography & infrastructure
 - Drone project – Commercial drones & Styrofoam gliders (e.g., Kurds)
 - 3D printers – establish and deliver supply chain
 - **Stay behind Gladio handbooks/ Partisan Pamphlet (RJ) [updated for information age]**
7. **Tech-led, low-risk UAV humanitarian operation as hunger and suffering increases.** Assuming grinding series of urban areas under siege, a humanitarian airlift via unmanned aerial vehicles could relieve humanitarian sufferings and allow us to escalate humanitarian flights to manned aircraft. We provide a full and costed proposal and concept of operations for the Arcturus T-20.
8. **Exploit UK's financial and trade levers.** Increase pressure on Putin via the seizing of ships and cargoes busting sanctions, interdicting transactions rather than assets and punishing financial transgressors.

the now-deceased commander Yevgeny Prigozhin. This objective required the formulation of “a new doctrine, operating concept, and legal framework, for effectively integrating the activities of PMCs and other [non-military] actors.” Under these guidelines, British mercenary firms capable of using “sophisticated weaponry like SAMS, cyber, combat air, drones” would be employed to “operate and train and accompany Ukraine formations”.

These operations were all intended to ultimately be “sponsored and commanded” by the UK government, “using discreet cover” to avoid triggering NATO’s Article 5.

Following the production of their grand strategy paper, Stickland invited his team of “side-

ways thinkers” at Project Alchemy to submit further proposals for Gladio-style operations. Among the pitches that arrived was a “mission” to “disable the Kerch Bridge in a way that is audacious, and disrupts road and rail access to Crimea and maritime access to the Sea of Azov.” The blueprints of this highly provocative plot were exposed by The Grayzone in October 2022, in the immediate aftermath of the truck bomb attack that crippled the Kerch Bridge.

Alchemy’s team also produced a PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Training a Ukrainian Commando Force to restore Maritime Sovereignty—Elders”, outlining plans to construct a 1,000-strong Ukrainian commando force “trained in Britain by military veterans equipped with British equipment” to “degrade the Russian Navy and open another flank in the fight for Kherson and the south of Ukraine”.

Alchemy’s team had been working on the plan for at least three months by the time of the presentation’s submission. “Ukrainians abroad and volunteers inside Ukraine” had already been recruited, in advance of 12 weeks basic training “in the use of all troop weapons including mortars, anti-tank missiles, sniper craft, cliff assault, small craft training, demolitions”, the proposal stated.



Training a Ukrainian Commando Force
Global Britain leading the way

What:
Training an immediate commando force to re-establish Ukraine's Maritime Sovereignty, degrade the Russian Navy and open another flank in the fight for Kherson and the south of Ukraine.

How
A thousand strong Commando force trained in Britain by military veterans equipped with British equipment.

IP – Elders Services Ltd.



BASIC TRAINING

We have been designing and preparing the Commando training package for 3 months:

- The WW2 Achnacarry Commando principals form the foundation of our training programme.
- All our instructors are British former Royal Marine Commandos and Special Boat Service.
- Recruited from Ukrainians abroad and volunteers inside Ukraine we have engaged a Ukrainian recruitment agency to ensure compliance with Ukrainian labour laws before being integrated into the Ukrainian Navy on completion of training.
- Basic training of 12 weeks be completed by the unit in the use of all troop weapons including mortars, anti-tank missiles, sniper craft, cliff assault, small craft training, demolitions. Full orientation of Crimea and the Ukraine coastal area and target recognition Russian forces and equipment.

Elders Services Ltd.

intervene in every way except 'official'", explicitly recommended "Stay-behind Gladio handbooks/ Partisan Pamphlets" which would be "updated for Information Age".

Another move Alchemy proposed was to deploy Britain’s “strong” private military [PMC] industry “to out-Wagner, Wagner”. In other words, the group aimed to establish a British rival to the Russian mercenary force founded by

proposal stated.

The plan called for formally integrating the commandos into the Ukrainian Navy. Alchemy boasted that the prospective force “will be a force multiplier and highly mobile”, while Russia’s “outdated doctrine will struggle with a highly motivated and well-equipped naval force conducting hit and run operations and targeting Crimea.”

Engaging social media platforms, diplomatically, legislatively and perhaps legally to ensure they enforce their existing policies is a quick and relatively easy way to seriously disrupt Russian power projection

Although there has been political focus on RT broadcasts, Russia's "information seeding" capability encompasses a far greater array of online media outlets. Some like Breakthrough News, Sputnik and Maffick have already been identified as Russian state-affiliated entities. Others, like Grayzone, have

¹ Clint Watts is Distinguished Research Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and Non-Resident Fellow at the Alliance for Securing Democracy and author of *Missing With The Enemy: Surviving in a Social Media World of Hackers, Terrorists, Russians and Fake News*

² In one instance in Sudan, a Facebook takedown of 1,000 Pages caused disinformation output to fall by 75%

managed to obscure their funding. A number of actions can be undertaken against these outlets. The most obvious is legal since the content of these media outriders is frequently in contravention of media law in the UK, US and EU. Aggrieved parties currently tend to ignore libel/defamation by these outlets. Were they to aggressively pursue these outlets, it is likely they would be forced to close.

Moreover, "individuals who are fluent Russian speakers and deemed suitable for covert undercover operations", including "female operators", would be "inserted into southern occupied Ukraine and Crimea for intelligence gathering and sabotage of key infrastructure targets." They would be trained by MI6 officers. For this, Alchemy asked the British government for a total of £73.5 million. "The program is at a high state of readiness. We are ready to go", the presentation forcefully declared.

The enormous sum was to be paid to Elders Services Ltd that was founded by Alchemy members and registered to an address just 15 miles from Fort Monckton, which was described by former MI6 officer Richard Tomlinson as "the SIS's field operations training centre". It is unknown how much money, if any, the firm received from the British government for resuscitating Operation Gladio in Ukraine. Elders Services Ltd shuttered in March 2023 after less than a year of operation, without filing financial accounts.

British spies call for 'action' against The Grayzone

Behind the Project Alchemy team's bravado was a sense that Western hegemony was crumbling on the icy borderlands separating Ukraine from Russia. Referring to the rising BRICS alliance, which gathered in Kazan, Russia this October to challenge the US-dominated financial order, Alchemy planners urged British leadership to "prepare for SWIFT II", as SWIFT was "going to be destroyed" by the West's anti-Russia sanctions, "slowly, but inevitably".

According to Alchemy's analysts, countries across the globe would naturally "see the need for a non-US alternative" means of safely parking their cash and trading. In a rare show of political sobriety, the British spooks predicted that sanctions on Russia combined with the Ukraine proxy war would impose higher prices on consumer goods and "hit British voters in the pocket".

This posed "a threat to public support" for the British government's "hard line" on Ukraine, they warned. "Domestic UK public opinion" would understandably get "fed up" paying more for everyday goods, meaning "pressure grows for a compromise".

To prepare the British public for the coming storm, Project Alchemy's plotters proposed what they blandly described as "information operations", but which could be more accurately described as a blend of domestic state propaganda and malign attacks on disruptive media outlets.

The task they outlined not only included "[dismantling] Russian disinformation infrastructure" by pressuring social media to ban RT and Sputnik, but also targeting critical

independent media like The Grayzone.

"A number of actions can be undertaken against these outlets. The most obvious is legal since the content of these media outriders is frequently in contravention of media law in the UK, US and EU", Alchemy insisted.

"Aggrieved parties currently tend to ignore libel/defamation by these outlets. Were they to aggressively pursue these outlets, it is likely they would be forced to close."

The Grayzone, it was claimed, had thus far "managed to obscure" its funding—a suggestion that this outlet is covertly funded by Russia or some other enemy state, which is completely false. The paranoid fantasies of British intelligence may explain why this journalist was quizzed on the subject by British counter-terror police when they detained and interrogated him at Luton International Airport in May 2023.

Alchemy plotters seek to place Britain at lead of war with Russia

In addition to playing a leading role in media manipulation, Alchemy sought to place Britain at the forefront of the International Criminal Court's agenda to investigate and prosecute the Russian government for alleged war crimes in Ukraine.

Alchemy suggested London "set international conditions, collection mechanisms and funding for collection of data and evidence" in the proxy conflict, and "provide all possible support, including intelligence" to the ICC "in its efforts to investigate war crimes", just as British spies did for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

Though not named in the document, high-profile British lawyers, including celebrity Amal Clooney, have since emerged at the forefront of efforts to prosecute Russian officials for war crimes, and establish an ICTY analogue. As The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal reported, Britain played a critical role in the appointment of Amal Clooney's mentor, Karim Khan, as ICC prosecutor.

Project Alchemy's provocative proposals appear to have reached the desk of PM Keir Starmer in some form. At NATO's 75th anniversary summit, Starmer issued his full-throated endorsement of deep strikes by the Ukrainian military into Russia. Echoing the aggressive language found in Alchemy documents, he pledged to "deliver £3 billion worth of support to Ukraine each year... for as long as it takes."

But as the Ukrainian military's offensive in Russia's Kursk region falters, the Biden administration has distanced itself from the calls for striking into the Russian heartland.¹ Fortunately for British leaders hellbent on taking the fight to Moscow, Project Alchemy has ensured that a platter of off-the-books options remains handy.

As Alchemy noted in its grand strategy paper, "The UK seeks always to act multilaterally, but is prepared to take a unilateral lead where achieving multilateral consensus might prove time-consuming or difficult." Among the war's covert sponsors, who were safely ensconced over 1,000 miles away from the front lines, it was firmly agreed: "we should attempt at all costs to keep Ukraine fighting."

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1. This article was written before the US-authorized ATACMS strike at a target in Russia's Bryansk Region on 19 November, which was followed 21 November by the firing of UK-supplied Storm Shadow missiles at a Russian command centre in Kursk Region.