

Swapping Russia's S-300 Air Defense System From One NATO Member State to Another

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Today, the dangers of military escalation are beyond description.

What is now happening in Ukraine has serious geopolitical implications. It could lead us into a World War III Scenario.

It is important that a peace process be initiated with a view to preventing escalation.

Global Research does not support Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The history of this war must be understood.

The bombing and shelling led by Ukraine's Armed Forces directed against the people of Donbass started eight years ago, resulting in the destruction of residential areas and more than 10,000 civilian casualties.

A bilateral Peace Agreement is required.

In a significantly escalatory move, potentially giving Russia justifiable pretext to mount an incursion in Slovakia, Bratislava appears to have struck a deal with NATO for transferring its Soviet-era S-300 air defense system to Ukraine in return for Netherlands and Germany delivering three Patriot missile systems to Slovakia.

Although NATO has provided thousands of anti-aircraft MANPADS to Ukraine's security forces and allied neo-Nazi militias, those are portable surface-to-air missiles, whereas S-300 air defense system, equivalent in capabilities to American Patriots, is a large and advanced system that constitutes a nation's backbone of air defense capabilities.

The Kremlin would definitely view any potential move involving transferring S-300 batteries to Ukraine with as much alarm as it viewed the scuttled Polish deal of transferring its entire MiG-29 fleet of 28 aircraft to Ukraine in return for American F-16 fighter jets.

The [Dutch government said](#) [1] Friday, March 18, it would send a Patriot missile defense system to Sliac, Slovakia, as part of NATO moves to strengthen air defenses in Eastern Europe. “The worsened safety situation in Europe as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine makes this contribution necessary,” Dutch Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren said in a statement. Germany was also sending two Patriot missile systems to Slovakia, the statement added.

Along with the Patriot batteries, the [Dutch will also send](#) [2] a small contingent of 150-200 troops, who would operate and also train Slovak forces in operating the American air defense system, as the forces of Slovakia as well as Ukraine are only trained to operate Russian-made military equipment, which many NATO countries that are former Soviet states possess.

Texas Rep. Mike McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, [told Politico](#) [3]:

“The U.S. was working with allies to send more S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Ukraine. The country has had the S-300 for years, so troops should require little-to-no training on how to operate the Soviet-era anti-aircraft equipment. CNN reported that Slovakia had preliminarily agreed to transfer their S-300s to Ukraine.

“A Western diplomat familiar with Ukraine’s requests said Kyiv specifically has asked the U.S. and allies for more Stingers and Starstreak man-portable air-defense systems, Javelins and other anti-tank weapons, ground-based mobile air-defense systems, armed drones, long-range anti-ship missiles, off-the-shelf electronic warfare capabilities, and satellite navigation and communications jamming equipment.

“To further help, there is a push to get Eastern European allies to send new air defense systems to Ukraine that the U.S. doesn’t have. At the top of the list are mobile, Russian-made missile systems such as the SA-8 and S-300. Like the S-300, Ukraine also possesses SA-8s. The SA-8 is a mobile, short-range air defense system still in the warehouses of Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. The larger, long-range S-300 is still in use by Bulgaria, Greece and Slovakia.

“Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin’s trip to Europe this week will include not only NATO headquarters in Brussels, but also stops in Bulgaria and Slovakia — countries that own S-300s and SA-8s — before heading back to Washington.”

Previously, Slovakia’s defense minister said Thursday, March 17, that the country was willing to give Ukraine its S-300 surface-to-air missile defense systems if it receives a “proper replacement.” Speaking at a press conference in Slovakia alongside US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Slovak Defense Minister Jaroslav Nad said Slovakia was [discussing the S-300s](#) [4] with the US and Ukraine. “We’re willing to do so immediately when we have a proper replacement. The only strategic air defense system that we have in Slovakia is S-300 system,” he added.

Lloyd Austin declined to say whether the United States might be willing to fill the gap. “I

don't have any announcements for you this afternoon. These are things that we will continue to work with all of our allies on. And certainly, this is not just a US issue. It's a NATO issue," Austin said while diplomatically evading confirming the barter deal for which he had traveled all the way from Washington to Eastern Europe.

NATO member Slovakia has one battery of the S-300 air defense system, inherited from the Soviet era after the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993. Following the Slovakia visit, Lloyd Austin also visited Bulgaria on Friday, March 18. Bulgaria has S-300 systems, but the country made it clear it had no plans to send any to Ukraine.

Bulgarian President Rumen Radev [prudently said](#) [5] that any arms supplies to Ukraine were equivalent to the country being dragged into war. Ultimately, he said, such an issue should be decided by the parliament. He also said that Bulgaria needed its S-300 for its own air defense, particularly for the Kozlodui nuclear power plant.

On Wednesday, March 16, President Biden announced an unprecedented package of \$800 million in military assistance to Ukraine, which includes 800 Stinger anti-aircraft systems, 2,000 anti-armor Javelins, 1,000 light anti-armor weapons, 6,000 AT-4 anti-armor systems and 100 Switchblade kamikaze drones.

The \$800 million will mean more than \$2 billion in the US military assistance has gone to Ukraine since Biden entered office in Jan. 2021, as the Biden administration had previously pledged \$200 million days before announcing the \$800 million package, \$350 million were disbursed immediately following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, and the administration [provided \\$650 million](#) [6] in military assistance to Ukraine during Biden's first year in office. In addition, the European Union pledged to commit nearly 500 million euros for its own military aid package.

The United States and its allies have [reportedly infused](#) [7] over \$3 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since the 2014 Maidan coup. Recently, the [Congress announced](#) [8] \$1.5 trillion package for funding the federal government through September, boosting national defense coffers to \$782 billion, about a 6 percent increase.

On top of the hefty budget increase, the package is set to deliver \$13.6 billion in emergency funding to help Ukraine, nearly twice the assistance package initially proposed, including \$3 billion for US forces and \$3.5 billion for military equipment to Ukraine, plus more than \$4 billion for US humanitarian efforts.

In an explosive scoop, the [Sunday Times reported](#) [9] on March 4 that defense contractors were recruiting former military veterans for covert operations in Ukraine for a whopping \$2,000 a day:

"The job is not without risk but, at almost \$60,000 a month, the pay is good. Applicants must have at least five years of military experience in Eastern Europe, be skilled in reconnaissance, be able to conduct rescue operations with little to no support and know their way around Soviet-era weaponry."

[Russian media alleged](#) [10] that the United States security agencies had launched a large-scale recruitment program to send private military contractors to Ukraine, including professionally trained mercenaries of Academi, formerly Blackwater, Cubic and Dyn Corporation.

Russia's Defense Ministry's spokesman Igor Konashenkov warned that foreign mercenaries in Ukraine would not be considered prisoners of war if detained in line with international humanitarian law, rather they could expect criminal prosecution at best.

In fact, private military contractors in close co-ordination and consultation with covert operators from CIA and Western intelligence agencies are not only training Ukraine's military and allied neo-Nazi militias in the use of caches of MANPADS and anti-armor munitions provided by the US, Germany and the rest of European nations as a military assistance to Ukraine but are also directing the whole defense strategy of Ukraine by taking active part in combat operations in some of the most hard fought battles against Russia's security forces north of Kyiv and at Kharkiv and Donbas.

In order to create an "international legion" comprising foreign mercenaries, Kyiv lifted visa requirements for anyone willing to fight. "Every friend of Ukraine who wants to join Ukraine in defending the country, please come over," Ukrainian President Zelensky pleaded at a recent press conference, adding "We will give you weapons."

Ukraine has already declared martial law and a general mobilization of its populace. Those policies include conscription for men aged 18-60 and the confiscation of civilian vehicles and structures, while Ukrainian convicts with military experience are being released from prison to back up the war effort.

In a show of solidarity with Ukraine, several European nations recently announced they would not only not criminalize but rather expedite citizens joining the NATO's war effort in Ukraine.

United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said she supported individuals from the UK who might want to go to Ukraine to join an international force to fight. She [told the BBC](#) [11] it was up to people to make their own decisions, but argued it was a battle for democracy. She said Ukrainians were fighting for freedom, "not just for Ukraine but for the whole of Europe."

Favoring providing lethal weapons only instead of deploying British mercenaries as cannon fodder in Ukraine's proxy war, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace took a nuanced approach and said Ukraine would instead be supported to "fight every street with every piece of equipment we can get to them."

[Buzzfeed News revealed](#) [12] on Feb. 27 thousands of foreign fighters had flocked to Ukraine since Russia's war against the country began in 2014. While most of them had been Russians and citizens of other former Soviet republics, hundreds had come from the European Union.

"This is the beginning of a war against Europe, against European structures, against democracy, against basic human rights, against a global order of law, rules, and peaceful coexistence," Ukrainian President Zelensky said in a statement announcing a decree on the creation of a foreign legion. "Anyone who wants to join the defense of Ukraine, Europe, and the world can come and fight side by side with the Ukrainians against the Russian war criminals."

The news of an official foreign unit was met with excitement by members of the Georgia National Legion, an English-speaking force of volunteers with Western military experience

who train Ukrainian troops and sometimes deploy to the front line with the country's marines. "This is what we have waited for. It's very good," Levan Pipia, a legion soldier and Georgian army veteran of the 2008 war with Russia, told BuzzFeed New.

In an [exclusive report](#) [13] on March 8, Reuters noted although the US and UK governments had nominally discouraged citizens from travelling to Ukraine to combat Russian forces, others, such as Canada or Germany, had cleared the way for citizens to get involved.

Despite formal directive by the UK government urging citizens against traveling to Ukraine, Reuters spilled the beans that among those who had arrived to fight for Ukraine were dozens of former soldiers from the British Army's elite Parachute Regiment, according to an ex-soldier from the regiment. Hundreds more would soon follow, he said.

Often referred to as the Paras, the regiment has in recent years served in Afghanistan and Iraq. "They're all highly trained, and have seen active service on numerous occasions," the ex-soldier from the regiment said. The Ukraine crisis will give them purpose, camaraderie and "a chance to do what they're good at: fight."

With a vast mobilization of Ukrainian men underway, the country has plenty of volunteer fighters. But there is a shortage of specialists who know how to use Javelin and NLAW anti-tank missiles, which professional soldiers train for months to use properly.

Anthony Capone, a wealthy healthcare entrepreneur in New York City, said he was providing funding for hundreds of ex-soldiers and paramedics who wanted to go to Ukraine. Capone added he was only funding ex-soldiers whose military credentials he could verify, or paramedics who currently worked in an emergency trauma setting. About 60% of those who had been in touch were American and 30% European.

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Notes

[1] [Dutch, Germans to Send 3 Patriot Missile Defense Systems to Slovakia](#)

[2] [The Dutch will send a contingent of 150-200 troops with Patriots](#)

[3] [US sends Switchblade drones to Ukraine](#)

[4] [Slovakia Says It Will Give Ukraine S-300 If It Gets Replacement](#)

[5] [Russia says will attack Slovakia's S-300 missile supplies to Ukraine](#)

[6] [Biden provided \\$650 million military aid to Ukraine in 2021](#)

- [7] [US provided over \\$3 billion in arms to Ukraine since 2014](#)
- [8] [\\$13.6 billion military and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine](#)
- [9] [Western mercenaries offered \\$2,000 a day to fight Putin](#)
- [10] [Mercenaries of Academi, Cubic, and Dyn Corporation fighting in Ukraine](#)
- [11] [Liz Truss said she supported individuals who might want to go to Ukraine](#)
- [12] [Thousands of foreign fighters have flocked to Ukraine](#)
- [13] [Ukraine offers purpose and camaraderie to mercenaries](#)

Featured image: Slovak S-300PMU TELs, ready to launch (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

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