

Labour's John Healey moots sending British military trainers to Ukraine

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UK Defence Secretary John Healey threatened a further escalation in NATO's war effort in Ukraine Wednesday. Asked by the *Times* during a visit to the country whether the UK might send soldiers to train Ukrainian troops on the spot, Healey replied, "We will look wherever we can to respond to what the Ukrainians want. They are the ones fighting."

What "the Ukrainians" [Zelensky and his military regime] want is what NATO tells them to want—in service to a war with Russia which is bleeding the country dry.

An X posting shows Ukrainian Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov (left) meeting UK Defence Minister John Healey in Kiev

Healey's comment that Britain and its allies needed to "work with the Ukrainians to help them motivate and mobilise more recruits" was made in the context of a Ministry of Defence statement which observed, "With Putin resorting to sending as many as 2,000 Russian soldiers to their deaths on the battlefield each day, it is critical that Ukraine is supported with a supply of properly trained and equipped soldiers." It left out the ending: "to die in equal and greater numbers."

Fuelling this slaughter, Healey also announced another £225 million in military equipment for Ukraine's armed forces, including small boats, reconnaissance drones, uncrewed surface vessels, loitering munitions, mines, and 90,000 explosive artillery charges.

The UK has already trained 51,000 Ukrainian soldiers on British soil under Operation Interflex. Healey has acknowledged that British Army medics are in Ukraine, apparently providing training, and there have been repeated reports of UK special forces covertly operating in the country since the war began. But this is the most brazen step towards the dispatch of NATO

troops yet taken.

Healey waved his fist, "Nearly three years after Putin launched his illegal full-scale invasion, the depths of his miscalculation are clearer than ever," gloating, "Putin himself is showing signs of weakness, calling in North Korean troops to reinforce his own army, walking out on Assad and failing to defend his own positions in Syria."

The Russian government has been clear that it considers NATO facilities and equipment in Ukraine legitimate targets. After the first use of US and UK long-range missiles to strike Russian Federation territory last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin went so far as to say in a televised address, "We believe that we have the right to use our weapons against military facilities of the countries that allow to use their weapons against our facilities."

The deployment of UK military trainers places them deliberately at risk of such a strike, which would be used as an excuse for a dramatic increase in NATO's participation in the war, increasing the danger of a nuclear exchange.

This is presumably why Healey told the *Times* ahead of his visit, "The part of this job that makes me lose sleep, and not much does, is weighing that decision to commit our UK men and women into areas they may be at risk." The paper comments, "some chiefs—at home and abroad—believe the threat from Russia is so severe that NATO could be at war in as little as three years." In another article its writers note, "there are concerns that an expanded British footprint in Ukraine could put the soldiers in danger. If Russia were to attack those forces, the UK could rapidly find itself in a war with Russia."

Not that this dissuades Healey, who insisted, "we can put Putin under pressure. Russia is failing to win. We

can put a lot more pressure on Russia. I see my job as defence secretary to step up the leadership on Ukraine.”

Nor did the threat of a direct war between Britain and nuclear-armed Russia feature in the wider media reports of Healey’s visit, which were either matter of fact or laudatory. Only the BBC made the faintest reference to the risks of a catastrophic confrontation, noting that, so far, “The UK and other NATO members have not sent troops to Ukraine or enforced a no-fly zone over the country, for fear of being pulled into a direct conflict with Russia.”

This is the direction of travel. A Ukrainian military source told the *Times* that British military trainers on Ukrainian soil would “mark the beginning of a ‘de facto’ deployment of NATO’s military infrastructure back inside Ukraine” and send a “powerful military-political signal”.

Healey’s comments on the deployment of British troops come in the context of a broad discussion in Europe on the subject, crossing all previously declared “red lines”. UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy, who as recently as last month declared, “We are not committing UK troops on the ground to Ukraine,” responded to the same question on Wednesday by saying, “It is strength that Vladimir Putin will respond to... The truth is Putin is not a man you can negotiate with.”

Meanwhile, Ukraine continues to carry out gravely provocative operations, assassinating Russian lieutenant-general Igor Kirrilov in the streets of Moscow and striking an oil refinery in Rostov with scores of drones and more than a dozen missiles this week.

This was aimed at least in part at creating a frenzied atmosphere ahead of Thursday’s European Union summit: the forum for a major discussion among the European powers about how to the respond to the incoming Trump presidency and its threats to upend the status quo in NATO and its policy in Ukraine—including by massively increasing European military spending.

British imperialism has made its own plans clear, aiming to win Trump to continued military escalation—of a war on which the UK has staked its international standing—supposedly in pursuit of his declared goal of “negotiations”. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer made this pitch during a visit with British

soldiers in Estonia Tuesday and reiterated it in a call with Trump Wednesday, where he self-reportedly “reiterated the need for allies to stand together with Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression and to ensure Ukraine is in the strongest possible position.”

His foreign and defence secretary were on-message. Lammy told reporters the discussion at the EU summit would focus on how to “put Ukraine in the strongest possible position as we head into and through 2025”.

Healey said, “The year may be ending, but the war is not. This is the time to step up further in Ukraine on every front.”

Kiev would have to enter any talks from a “position of strength not weakness”. Moreover, “Anyone who thinks that fight [to] talk is going to be a simple switch, misses I think the likely reality that you may have talking and still fighting.

“And whether or not you have got talking, that may or may not be successful in reaching an agreement.”



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