



## Biden Says Ukraine Invasion Risk “Very High”; Russia Expels US Deputy Amb., Demands US Leave Eastern Europe

### Description

### Summary:

- Reports overnight from both sides (Ukraine, Rebels) that shelling has begun, claiming ceasefire broken
- US envoy says evidence on the ground is that Russia is moving toward an “imminent invasion,” says “this is a crucial moment.”
- Russia expels US Deputy Ambassador Bartle Gorman
- Russia says no invasion of Ukraine in plans
- Russia issues statement demanding all US troops leave Central and Eastern Europe
- Biden says probability of invasion is “very high”, says Russia “involved in false flag moves”
- Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov accused the West on Thursday of “information terrorism.”
- Blinken to speak at UN Security Council at 10amET

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**Update (0925ET):** Washington is doubling down on its allegations that Russia is planning to use a false flag attack as a pretext to invade Ukraine Russia says US failed to give a “constructive response” to its proposal, which includes the rejection of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia.

Here’s more from [Reuters](#):

NATO was “concerned that Russia is trying to stage a pretext for an armed attack against Ukraine.

There is still no clarity, no certainty about the Russian intentions”, the Western military alliance’s Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

“They have enough troops, enough capabilities to launch a full-fledged invasion of Ukraine with very little or no warning time,” he told reporters at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels. “That is what makes the situation so dangerous.”

Here’s more about today’s latest “skirmish” from Ukraine:

A senior Ukrainian government source said the shelling at the line of contact with Russian-backed separatist forces went beyond the scale of ceasefire violations routinely reported throughout the conflict.

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**Update (0910ET):** Ukrainian authorities claim that shelling between government forces and separatist rebels in the Donbas region has ended as of 1300 local time. Meanwhile, a flurry of headlines have hit the tape, conveying Russia’s latest round of denials.

- RUSSIA SAYS THERE IS NO INVASION OF UKRAINE IN PLANS – IFAX CITES RUSSIAN RESPONSE ON SECURITY GUARANTEES
- RUSSIA HAS NOT SEEN FULL INTENTION FROM UNITED STATES TO STICK TO INDIVISIBILITY PRINCIPLE OF SECURITY
- RUSSIA SAYS DE-ESCALATION REQUIRES THAT UKRAINE COMPLY WITH MINSK AGREEMENTS AND NO MORE WEAPONS SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO UKRAINE
- RUSSIA INSISTS ON WITHDRAWAL OF ALL U.S. FORCES FROM CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
- RUSSIA EXPECTS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FROM U.S. AND NATO REGARDING NO FURTHER EASTWARD ENLARGEMENT
- RUSSIA SAYS ARMS CONTROL ISSUES CANT BE CONSIDERED SEPARATELY FROM OTHER TOPICS – RIA

The US, meanwhile, is insisting again that Russia is “involved” in “false flag” moves (though it still hasn’t offered any actual proof to support these allegations). President Joe Biden said he has no plans to speak with Putin again. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is preparing to deliver a press briefing at 1000ET.

Meanwhile, Russia: “In the absence of the readiness of the American side to agree on firm, legally binding guarantees to ensure our security from the US and its allies, Russia will be forced to respond, including through the implementation of measures of a military-technical nature.”

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**Update (0845ET):** Russia has expelled the deputy US ambassador from Moscow in the latest hostile development of the day.

- BREAKING: Russia expels US Deputy Ambassador Bartle Gorman

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**Update (0800ET):** The US envoy to the UN is turning up the hysterical warmongering rhetoric up to '11' by insisting that Russian troop movements within their own country suggest an attack on Ukraine is "imminent", with not additional evidence to back that up.

- U.S. ENVOY TO U.N. SAYS EVIDENCE ON THE GROUND IS THAT RUSSIA IS MOVING TOWARD AN 'IMMINENT INVASION', SAYS 'THIS IS A CRUCIAL MOMENT'

Sound [familiar?](#)

And just like that, [futures are tumbling](#), as EU diplomats break up today's Ukraine talks to shift their focus on a G-20 summit with the African Union.

The informal meeting of the Members of the European Council on a state of play of latest developments related to Russia-Ukraine has now ended.

Next on is [#EUAU](#) summit [pic.twitter.com/8rY5BuCeGP](https://pic.twitter.com/8rY5BuCeGP)

— Barend Leyts (@BarendLeyts) [February 17, 2022](#)

And European Commission chief Charles Michel said he spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy earlier this morning.

Spoke with president [@ZelenskyyUa](#) ahead of informal [#EUCO](#)

Closely following the situation on the ground.

Deescalation is urgently needed.

EU solidarity with [#Ukraine](#)

— Charles Michel (@eucopresident) [February 17, 2022](#)

We're awaiting their remarks shortly.

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**Update (0715ET):** As NATO pledges to step up its troop presence around Russia's borders, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko says his country could host nuclear weapons or even "super nuclear" weapons if it faces any external threats, as tensions soar between NATO and Russia.

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After days of conflicting reports about Russian troop movements from NATO and myriad media

sources, the Biden Administration and its incessant warnings about an impending invasion ***have become the butt of jokes across the Internet...***

Putin's Ukraine Strategy [pic.twitter.com/Uqd25hHRDc](https://pic.twitter.com/Uqd25hHRDc)

— Mohammed Soliman (@ThisIsSoliman) [February 16, 2022](#)

But finally, on Thursday, after weeks of waiting, the International media reported “heavy fire” in the war-torn Donbass region of Ukraine.

**“The situation on the line of contact has sharply escalated. The enemy is making attempts to unleash active hostilities,”** a message posted on the official self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic's Telegram channel read.



However, unfortunately for the US media and its propaganda machine, **it was troops aligned with the Ukrainian government who started the firing**, according to [RT](#).

**Leaders from the separatist Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in the east of Ukraine reported on Thursday that government troops had attacked the outskirts of its territory.** According to the DPR, units from Kiev fired at several towns and villages using 82 millimeter mortars, hand grenades, and rifles.

But some western outlets claimed the question of 'who fired first?' just isn't clear: According to [Reuters](#) (which is technically headquartered in the UK) the two sides traded accusations of firing across the ceasefire line. *But don't worry – this kind of thing happens all the time*, per Reuters:

The details of the incidents could not be independently confirmed, and the initial reports suggested they were on a similar scale to ceasefire violations that have been common throughout the eight year conflict.

RT added that the Ukrainian government-backed troops blew up a Kindergarten in the Lugansk People's Republic, the other breakaway region, during the exchange,

**The Ukrainian Armed Forces subsequently reported that a settlement located near the Lugansk People's Republic, the other breakaway territory in the region,** had been attacked and photographs circulating online purport to show a kindergarten hit by a shell on the side controlled by government forces. Authorities stated that two civilians had been injured, missiles had hit the school, and half the area had lost electricity. The residents were evacuated.

A couple of Ukrainian civilians were reportedly injured in that attack. Again, western media outlets like [ABC News](#) reported that it was the Russia separatist forces who had shelled a school in the southeastern village of Stanytsia Luhanska.

Meanwhile, back across the border with Russia, US authorities are again warning that instead of pulling back troops, Russia is adding another 7K. President Vladimir Putin has said the "partial" troop pullback he promised earlier this week would take time,

U.K. Defense Secretary Ben Wallace backed the U.S. assessment. **"I think we have seen the opposite of some of the statements, we've seen an increase of troops over the last 48 hours, up to 7,000, we've seen a bridge constructed from Belarus into Ukraine or near Ukraine,"** he told reporters on Thursday in Brussels.

Ukraine also complained about a DDoS attack on government websites that has become another thorn in President Zelenskiy's side.

The Kremlin has denied the US reports of the latest troop movements, as well as claims that it's planning anything beyond military exercises. Diplomatic talks between Russia, Ukraine and a handful of European allies (Germany, France and the OSCE): **"The statement about 7,000 is just as much a fake as the ones about an attack on Feb. 15-16,"** Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova

said in a text message Thursday.

Speaking during his now-daily press briefings, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reiterated warnings about a looming Russian “false flag” attack that Nato and its leaders have been repeating for weeks now (remember, [“this is Alex Jones territory”](#)).

Anybody interested in watching can do so below:

There were also reports of the rebel forces downing a Ukrainian drone.

LPR air defense forces intercepted Ukrainian drone, which was used to adjust fire on the territory of the republic – statement by the LPR army

Inside?Donetsk [pic.twitter.com/Bu1N2Eh9bG](https://pic.twitter.com/Bu1N2Eh9bG)

— Victor (@vicktop55) [February 17, 2022](#)

Aked about the school attack, Stoltenberg called it a “big provocation”. The Ukrainian President Zelenskiy said around the same time that it’s “important” for European diplomats to remain in Ukraine.

On the diplomacy front, EU leaders will discuss the Russia tensions Thursday in Brussels, before G-7 foreign ministers meet in Munich on Saturday. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will speak by phone later Thursday. Officials in Moscow have dismissed US warnings of a possible invasion of Ukraine as “hysteria” and propaganda.

by Tyler Durden

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