



US Proxy Attrition War in Ukraine Backfiring, Says US Diplomat

Description

*Former US ambassador to Finland, **Earle Mack** has visited Ukraine several times, on humanitarian missions. He claims, in a March 29 piece for *The Hill*, that, during his last visit, he could see a lack of morale firsthand, in the voice of the leaders to whom he talked. More importantly, Mack states matter-of-factly that the West has been “propping up Ukraine to fight a proxy war”, which is, in itself, a very important admission from a former US diplomat. He adds, however, that Kiev desperately needs “modern fighting hardware”, and claims that, by the time American Abrams tanks reach the country, in eight to ten months, the conflict could be over already with a defeated Ukraine.*

To the general public, this reasoning might appear strange. After all, everyone knows that the US and its allies have been sending tons of weapons, ammunition and lots of cash to Ukraine. The constant sending of aid to Kiev has even caused Washington and European powers to have a hard time replenishing their own stocks of weapons.

It is true that American weapons manufacturers profit tremendously from today's conflict. Much the same way portions of the sums sent to Ukraine (Europe's most corrupt nation) are being diverted to shady schemes, the Pentagon, as a matter of fact, cannot account for billions worth of weaponry. Many such weapons appeared in the Middle East and Africa, trafficked through black markets. This however is only part of the story.

When Ukrainian **President Volodymyr Zelensky** visited Washington, during a 21 December 2022 joint press conference, his American counterpart, **Joe Biden**, provided a clearer picture. Regarding the insistent calls for more powerful weaponry being sent to Kiev, the US President said that providing Ukrainians with long-distance missiles “would have a prospect of breaking up NATO”, and “breaking up the EU and the rest of the world.” He added that his NATO allies were “not looking to go to war with Russia. They're not looking for a third world war.” After saying that much, Biden “reassured” the Ukrainian leader standing next to him, by telling Zelensky this: “as I said, Mr. President, you don't have to worry — we are staying with Ukraine as long as Ukraine is there.”

Inadvertently, Biden's December remarks almost paraphrased the cruel joke about Americans being willing to fight “to the last Ukrainian”. More importantly, his blunt answer amounted to an indirect

admission that Washington keeps arming and aiding Kiev as part of a proxy protracted war. It would thus appear the West's strategy is not about giving Ukrainians victory but rather about wearing down Moscow. The conflict, however, is wearing out Ukraine itself – and even the West.

It is not just Ukraine that is in a bad shape, though: de-industrialized Europe is in fact more dependent than ever on the US for security, its military being in an “appalling state”, according to experts. The EU's defense base lacks a common defense market, as well as the necessary production capacities and supply chains. Moreover, whenever the EU tries to articulate an industrial policy, Washington steps in. This is so because American interests benefit not only from the defense industry, but also from the continent's own energy crisis and deindustrialization. Washington's goal of a NATOized Europe is made impossible by the US own economic and industrial policies against Europe, as exemplified by Biden's subsidies package.

Earle Mack describes the current conflict as attrition warfare, that is one which seeks military victory by wearing down the enemy. On a larger scale, also including the realms of financial and economic warfare, one could very well argue that the political West has indeed been trying to “wear down” the Russian Federation in all manners, by arming Kiev plus imposing unprecedented sanctions on Moscow. The sanctions have boosted Eurasian integration and largely backfired. Alas, the same could be said about Washington's military attrition strategy, which normally aims for the long run. If this is an attrition war, it seems Ukraine is bound to tire out first – and is tiring out already. Hence, Earle Mack's sense of urgency.

With that in mind, the former diplomat writes that the US and its allies should urgently send Kiev “military modern weaponry, including more Patriot missiles and many more Leopard 2 and Abrams tanks.”

In his piece, Earl Mack, also rightly reminds readers that although the current Russian military campaign in Ukraine is just a year old, that nation “has been in almost continuous conflict” since 2014 – this, one might add, is a situation that has been largely promoted and fueled by the West and by NATO's expansion. During these years, Kiev's human rights violations against the Donbass population have been covered-up by Western press, to the point of, more recently, whitewashing the Azov Regiment's neonazism. In a July 2020 piece, I described the then Donbass combat as Europe's forgotten war – and in a way it remains so, because the large public still thinks of military conflict in Ukraine as being only a year old phenomenon.

Ukrainians are thus approaching “a decade of death and chaos”, in Earle Mack's words. Over 10 million Ukrainians left their country. Interestingly, over 5.5 million, from Ukraine and Donbass, have fled to Russia. The loss of populations plus badly damaged infrastructure is exhausting the country.

Good diplomacy and lots of table talks are needed more than ever. Instead, Mack claims that to obtain victory, “Ukraine needs everything, everywhere, all at once” – and urgently. In any case, one can only give so much. It remains to be seen how much the US-led West is willing to give, while the Washington world system collapses.

by Uriel Araujo

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