

International Briefs

Kremlin's Peskov: Russia in a 'State of War' from Collective West's Actions

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov granted an [exclusive interview](#) to *Argumenty i Fakty* journalists on March 22, before the deadly terrorist attack in Moscow later in the day that killed at least 133. Peskov stated: "We are in a state of war. Yes, this began as a special military operation, but as soon as that clique was formed—the collective West plus Ukraine, when the collective West became a participant on the side of Ukraine—for us it became war.... And every person should understand it, for their own internal mobilization."

In *Argumenty i Fakty's* paraphrase, Peskov said: "Russia is continuing to act in such a way that Ukraine's military power becomes unable to threaten the security of its [Russia's] citizens and its territory.

"What does the President say? We have four new constituent territories of the Federation. For us, the main thing is to protect our people in these areas and to liberate the part of their territory that is currently *de facto* occupied by the Kyiv regime.

"According to [Peskov], Russia cannot tolerate the existence on its borders of a state whose documented intention is to use any methods whatsoever, to take away Crimea, not to mention the territory of the new regions."

Later, Peskov is directly quoted when he added for clarification: "Essentially, after the collective West entered all of this, it turned into war. *De jure* it is an SMO [special military operation]. *De facto* for us it turned into war after the collective West more and

more directly has been increasing the level of its involvement in this conflict. That is, the changes have occurred in the essence of things, not in the juridical sense."

Peskov's remarks are making headlines everywhere, with spins on many of his points, although he has been clear enough for months. For example, in December 2023, Peskov told *NBC News* that Russia's fight remains a "special military operation," but said the West's efforts against Russia were indisputably a war, citing what he called "direct" involvement of foreign countries in the conflict and U.S.-led economic sanctions. "If it's not a war, then how would you like to call it?" Peskov said, "We call it war."

The comments of Peskov follow remarks of Russian President Putin March 17, when he was asked by reporters about French President Macron's floating the possibility that French troops could be deployed to Ukraine to fight Russia. Putin responded: "It is clear to everyone that this will be one step away from a full-scale World War III. I think hardly anyone is interested in this."

Russian MP to French TV: 'We Will Kill All French Soldiers' in Ukraine

After broadcasting March 20 Marine Le Pen's calling out of President Emmanuel Macron's reckless "boots on the ground in Ukraine" talk, France's BRM-TV hit the French population between the eyes the following day. It broadcast an interview with Russian State Duma Deputy Chairman Pyotr Tolstoy, who read France the Riot Act. Tolstoy warned that Macron's idea of sending French soldiers into Ukraine

"will end with coffins covered by the [French] tricolor flag.... We don't care for [Macron's] opinions. We don't care for Macron himself, what he says, or his limits. And we will kill all French soldiers who set foot on Ukrainian soil. Every single one that comes."

Tolstoy reviewed Russia's record in taking out foreign mercenaries. France has only supplied 367 of some 13,000 mercenaries, but 147 have already died in battle. He asked the French public to consider how many more could perish if Paris officially deploys troops to the conflict zone. His message was clear that the West is poking the bear, and he was direct: "The French must understand the consequences.... You are provoking World War III."

French Colonel: Deploy French Troops to the Dnieper River in Ukraine

French Lt. Col. (ret.) Vincent Arbarétier was interviewed on French TV's *Direct LCI* (LCI: Le Chaîne Info, or The News Channel) on March 19 about President Macron's proposal to send French troops to fight alongside Ukrainians against Russia. Standing before a large map of Ukraine, Arbarétier proposed to mass French troops along the Dnieper River in Ukraine, and argued that France's nuclear capability would help deter Russian retaliation. An English translation of the [exchange](#):

LCI: There are two major scenarios that are envisaged. The first is to mass troops along the Dnieper River. Colonel, ... why the Dnieper?

Arbarétier: In fact, the Dnieper

River is an important separation between Western Ukraine and Eastern Ukraine. Historically it has a role. In particular, it is easy to recognize on the ground, which is important for soldiers. So if France told Russia, that any crossing would be forbidden under penalty of ... [pause]

LCI: Of retaliation?

Arbarétier: ... of retaliation, it is immediately identifiable.... And it is important because, of course, you have Kiev, but you have an entire area where, to the west of the Dnieper, you have populations who speak Ukrainian, who have been Ukrainian for a very long time—which is also the case of those who are in the east. But there, it is a barrier that is visible

LCI: And precisely, Colonel, the mere fact of massing troops on the ground along the Dnieper, even if we say we do not shoot first, wouldn't that be considered as a provocation by Russia?

Arbarétier: Absolutely not, because it is forcing Russia into discussions, while being in an equal position. That is to say, we have soldiers, we are a nuclear power, our soldiers can be deployed quickly. This is one of the main qualities of the French army compared to other armies, including the German army. And it is not just a question of the quality of our soldiers, but also because the President has the power to deploy forces immediately. This is not the case with Chancellor Scholz, who must ... have agreement from Parliament.

UN Chief Warns Nuclear War Risk at Highest Point in Decades

UN Secretary General António Guterres, in an [address](#) in the UN Security Council's open debate

on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation March 18, called for nuclear disarmament as the only path for avoiding a nuclear war.

"Today, we meet at a time when geopolitical tensions and mistrust have escalated the risk of nuclear warfare to its highest point in decades. The Doomsday Clock is ticking loudly enough for all to hear. From academics and civil society groups, calling for an end to the nuclear madness. To Pope Francis, who calls the possession of nuclear arms 'immoral ...'.

"To Hollywood, where *Oppenheimer* brought the harsh reality of nuclear doomsday to vivid life for millions around the world.

"Humanity cannot survive a sequel to *Oppenheimer*. Voice after voice, alarm after alarm, survivor after survivor, are calling the world back from the brink.

"And what is the response? States possessing nuclear weapons are absent from the table of dialogue. Investments in the tools of war are outstripping investments in the tools of peace. Arms budgets are growing, while diplomacy and development budgets are shrinking....

"An accidental launch is one mistake, one miscalculation, one rash act away. And ultimately, all of humanity will pay the price. A nuclear war must never be waged—because a nuclear war can never be won."

Guterres went on to call for nuclear disarmament as the only path to peace, saying this is the first step as part of a "New Agenda for Peace."

NATO Military Committee Chief in Ukraine Promises NATO Membership

In the midst of the debate about sending NATO troops into Ukraine,

Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, arrived in Kyiv on March 20 for a high-profile, two-day visit, in which he trumpeted the message that Ukraine belongs in NATO. He led the first NATO military delegation to visit Ukraine since February 22, 2022, NATO's [press release](#) emphasized.

His visit "is a testament to the fact that NATO and Ukraine are closer than ever.... We are getting closer, more compatible," Adm. Bauer said in [opening](#) the Kyiv Security Forum (KSF) March 21. "Together, we are doing everything to ensure that Ukraine becomes a member of our Alliance. The Swedish flag will not be the only blue and yellow flag at NATO Headquarters," the *New Voice of Ukraine* enthusiastically reported the promise of the "honored guest."

The KSF is the NATO-Atlanticist outpost founded in 2007 by Victoria Nuland's infamous "Yats," Arseniy Yatsenyuk, whom she insisted become the 2014 coup's prime minister. Yatsenyuk himself welcomed the audience of foreign Atlanticists and Ukrainian leaders. The partners of the Arseniy Yatsenyuk Open Ukraine Foundation in the KSF operation are the Atlantic Council, the NATO Information and Documentation Center, the U.S. National Democratic Institute, the British monarchy's Chatham House, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany's Social Democracy.

Bauer spent the rest of his visit in meetings, including one with President Zelensky and others with Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, and Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Olha Stefanishyna, General Oleksandr Syrskiy, and members of the unicameral Verkhovna Rada.