

Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Latest News From Russia

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What I am about to say is surely known and under analysis in the American intelligence agencies. It is being used by the Pentagon to quietly change its nuclear force posture in Europe. However, we hear not a word about it in the media, not in mainstream, and not yet in alternative news.

I maintain that it is very important for it to be heard and reflected upon by the general public in the United States and in Europe, disagreeable though it may be at the start of a new week. So here goes...

Last Friday when I published my selective account of the Q&A session with President Vladimir Putin at the culmination point of the St Petersburg International Economic Forum I omitted one important issue: how Russia will respond to the dispatch of "Ukrainian" F-16s from some air base in a NATO country into the war zone in Ukraine. I was considering remedying that oversight on Saturday morning when a comment from one reader forced my hand. She wrote in that Italy's daily newspaper *La Repubblica* quoted Putin as saying on Friday Russia will destroy such a base in response. I responded on Saturday in the Comments section that the Russian President had in fact been evasive in his comment, saying only that Russia *could* destroy such a base and was now taking the issue under advisement.

However, yesterday evening's edition of the *Vladimir Solovyov* talk show indicates that the *Repubblica* reporter was closer to the truth than I. A patient and knowledgeable Russian colonel in retirement who is a frequent guest on the talk show explained that the Kremlin is now considering exactly with what means to destroy such a NATO air base, not whether to do it. And the likely means will be use of tactical nuclear weapons on a Ramstein or whatever NATO base is involved. We may say that Germany is placing itself in the bulls-eye of any escalation in the Ukraine war if it proceeds with the F-16s to Ukraine program.

Why all the fuss over the F-16s, you may ask. After all, Putin has said loud and clear that Russia will destroy the F-16s in the air just as it has been destroying the Leopard tanks and America's Bradley armored personnel carriers while pushing back the ongoing Ukrainian counter-offensive. To understand better, we have to thank the good colonel once again. He alerted us to an important detail that you will not find mentioned in *The New York Times*: the first F-16s scheduled to be supplied to the Ukrainian Air Force are from Belgium and Denmark, and are all nuclear-capable, which is not a necessary feature of these planes. Since the Russians are unable to determine what kind of munitions the "Ukrainian" F-16s will actually be delivering to the war zone, they must assume that they are carrying tactical nuclear bombs intended to be dropped on the Russian Army troop concentrations. The effect of such an attack could be devastating, hence the Russian threat to the air bases from which such planes are launched.

The next important revelation made during the Solovyov show came with respect to the first delivery of tactical nuclear weapons to Minsk which was marked by a visit to Belarus and interview with Lukashenko by the co-host of the *Sixty Minutes* news and discussion show Olga Skabeyeva.

In answer to her question about where the nuclear warheads are being stored, Lukashenko said 'everywhere.' The meaning of this was kindly deciphered for us laymen by the colonel in retirement on the Solovyov program: this signifies a cardinal shift in the Russian handling of tactical nuclear arms away from their traditional separation of the warheads kept in a central storage far from the delivery carriers to the method used by the U.S. military with respect to its tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. The Americans, he said stored the nukes just under the jets that would be used to deliver them. Now in Belarus, the warheads will also be just next to the planes and Iskander missiles that will carry them. This means that the time to launch will depend only on the time for approval from the Boss. And with respect to that, Lukashenko told Skabeyeva that he had just to make a phone call to Vladimir Vladimirovich and approval would be instantaneous.

Why such a hair-trigger mechanism for unleashing nuclear weapons to defend Belarus?

For an answer to that, go to today's article in *The Financial Times* on how Poland is now preparing hundreds of Belarus fighters to go across the border and overthrow Lukashenko. To which I can only say: Warsaw, watch out! Lukashenko is one bold and decisive defender of his country, as his standing on the streets with a Kalashnikov in his hands when there were Western financed and promoted street demonstrations in Minsk aiming to overthrow him.

Still another item from the Solovyov show demanding our attention concerns what the good colonel calls the American response to the shipment of nuclear arms to Belarus: America now plans to install tactical nuclear weapons in Romania and Poland. Why, one might ask, in those two countries? For that you need only consider what the Kremlin has been saying for more than a decade about the U.S. bases set up in both countries supposedly to house anti-ballistic missile systems intended to bring down Iranian missiles fired on Europe. The Russians always objected that these installations would be dual-purpose and were a cover for placing nuclear-armed cruise missiles directed against themselves. Now if the USA indeed puts such missiles into the two countries, the Russian claims will have been vindicated and Washington is shown, yet again, to be a blatant liar on the world stage.

Finally, the colonel gave us an invaluable insight to changes in Russian thinking on tactical

nuclear weapons which we otherwise missed. I have in mind Putin's answer at the Forum to the question of whether Russia would use tactical nuclear weapons in the Ukraine theater. Putin's loud and clear 'no' was, of course, an answer to the proposals of Sergei Karaganov for preemptive and instructive nuclear strikes in his just published essay in the magazine *Russia in Global Affairs*.

As I reported, Putin went on to say that Russia has no need to show force by some preemptive strike because everyone knows it has many more tactical weapons than the West. And while the United States has called for talks on reduction of stockpiles of such weapons, Russia will not enter into such talks, and says to the West, "fuck you," if I may translate his rude remark in Russian into corresponding four-letter English.

That last remark brought smiles to the faces of many Russians in the audience. But it was not just theatrics, says the good colonel: in fact Russia had been talking with Americans about the possibility of reducing stockpiles, but now, in the context of the NATO proxy war it has no intention of resuming such talks.

With that I end today's survey of our dismal progression on the way to Armageddon.

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