

# UK Announces Deal to Sell Warships to Kiev, Raising Tensions in Black Sea

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Global Research, November 19, 2021

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Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#), [US NATO](#)

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*Tensions on the rise in the Black Sea. London recently announced that it will be selling warships to Ukraine. The vessels would be allocated in the Black Sea region. The possible deal belies a previous announcement by the British government that it would not sell arms to Ukraine and increases regional frictions between Ukraine, NATO, and Russia. The presence of modern and equipped Western ships in that area will generate a new escalation of instability, unnecessarily undermining international peace.*

In a statement this week, UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace gave a positive signal for heavy weapons sales to Ukraine. The equipment to be traded would be focused on modern warships with high destruction power. The aim is to significantly increase Ukrainian naval power amid a regional context of tensions in the Black Sea. To that end, the British secretary also said that Kiev could pay for the ships using the amount received from the loan taken by the Ukrainian government as part of a trade agreement signed between the two countries in early November. As there is a mutual geostrategic interest in this deal – given the UK’s ambitions to weaken Russian presence in Eastern Europe – there appears to be little concern on the part of the British over how the debt generated by this deal will be paid off.

According to the data released so far, the sale includes the negotiation of two mine countermeasure ships and the joint production of eight warships with missiles, as well as a new frigate. Possible aid from London to Kiev for the construction of a naval infrastructure platform, with the modernization of the weapons systems of current Ukrainian ships, is also being negotiated.

Both Ben Wallace and his Ukrainian counterpart Oleksii Reznikov, commenting on the case, emphasized the fact that the agreement is aimed against Russia, which makes the project a real open affront to the stability of Russia-Ukraine and Russia-West relations. However, in a joint statement, they both tried to be delicate in their words and said the aim was not to

make the UK and Ukraine adversary to Russia, but that the move comes amid concerns about Russia's presence in the border region: "Our governments have no desire to be adversarial, or seek in any way to strategically encircle or undermine the Russian Federation (...) We are concerned by Russia's military build-up and activity around the borders of Ukraine".

As we can see, once again, the West is trying to arm Ukraine and turn this state – which has an openly anti-Russian political and ideological orientation – into a regional power to face Moscow's presence within its own strategic environment. The accusations made by Kiev and London – adopting the Washington-born speech – against Russia, pointing to it as a threat to international security due to its actions on the western border, are truly weak and unsubstantiated. Moscow has not only repeatedly denied all accusations, but it has also demonstrated through its actions in that region that it does not plan to start a war or heighten existing tensions. On the contrary, Russian military movements on the western border have been minimal in recent years – at least when compared to NATO maneuvers, which have now become constant and virtually uninterrupted.

The Russian government frequently denounces NATO's dangerous maneuvers, with the international society remaining silent. Recently, for example, Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced that NATO planes are operating maneuvers just 20km away from the Russian border, which is a real provocative affront – and, as on previous occasions, no action has been taken within the UN in order to investigate the case or demand a more peaceful posture from NATO. Indeed, in the current international arena, it has become commonplace for NATO and Ukraine to conduct aggressive operations against Russia and justify them with defamatory speech about an alleged Russian intention to invade Europe. This has simply been passively accepted by the UN and peacekeeping organizations, with no action being taken.

Now, with this acquisition of new war equipment, the situation becomes even more complicated. The UK is providing heavy weapons to a state that is currently being denounced in international courts for maintaining ethnic persecution against the Russian population and that is openly considering the possibility of attacking Russia. Obviously, such a scenario would be disastrous for Ukraine, but geostrategy is a minor point in Kiev's geopolitical orientation, which is motivated by a fanatical anti-Russian ideology. This should be reason enough for the international society to intervene in the case, condemning the negotiation and applying sanctions against the Ukraine and the UK.

Previously, several Western governments – including the UK itself – had pledged not to sell heavy weapons to Ukraine amid rising tensions at the border. But the move comes amid recent UK interest in increasing its naval expansionism. Several British military vessels have circled the Black Sea in recent months, with London openly trying to elevate its geopolitical status in a post-Brexit scenario. So, it is possible to say that, in addition to all the factors mentioned here, once again Ukraine is being used by Western powers to secure interests that do not concern it.

It remains to be seen, however, what will be the position of British public opinion. Unlike international society, citizens of Western countries are already tired of seeing their states investing billions in military operations abroad while the Western social rates decline, and state investments are absent. The UK is one of the countries with the greatest popular rejection of partnerships with Ukraine, due to allegations of corruption against the Ukrainian

government. Considering this, how will the people react when they see their taxes being once again converted into arms supply for Kiev? Certainly, there will be a negative response.

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