

By Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J.S. Davies

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These leaks and investigative reports are not the first, nor will they be the last, to shine a light through the veil of propaganda that permits these wars to destroy young people's lives in faraway places.

The U.S. corporate media's first response to the leaking of secret documents about the war in Ukraine was to throw some mud in the water, declare "nothing to see here," and cover it as a depoliticized crime story about a 21-year-old Air National Guardsman who published secret documents to impress his friends. President Biden [dismissed](#) the leaks as revealing nothing of "great consequence."

What these documents reveal, however, is that the war is going worse for Ukraine than our political leaders have admitted to us, while going badly for Russia too, so that [neither side](#) is likely to break the stalemate this year, and this will lead to "a protracted war beyond 2023," as one of the documents says.

The publication of these assessments should lead to renewed calls for our government to level with the public about what it realistically hopes to achieve by prolonging the bloodshed, and why it continues to reject the resumption of the promising peace negotiations it [blocked](#) in April 2022.

We believe that blocking those talks was a dreadful mistake, in which the Biden administration capitulated to the warmongering, since-disgraced U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and that current U.S. policy is compounding that mistake at the cost of tens of thousands more Ukrainian lives and the destruction of even more of their country.

In most wars, while the warring parties strenuously suppress the reporting of civilian casualties

for which they are responsible, professional militaries generally treat accurate reporting of their own military casualties as a basic responsibility. But in the virulent propaganda surrounding the war in Ukraine, all sides have treated military casualty figures as fair game, systematically exaggerating enemy casualties and understating their own.

Publicly available U.S. estimates have [supported](#) the idea that many more Russians are being killed than Ukrainians, deliberately skewing public perceptions to support the notion that Ukraine can somehow win the war, as long as we just keep sending more weapons.

The leaked documents provide internal U.S. military intelligence assessments of casualties on both sides. But different documents, and different copies of the documents circulating online, show [conflicting](#) numbers, so the propaganda war rages on despite the leak.

The most [detailed](#) assessment of attrition rates of troops says explicitly that U.S. military intelligence has “low confidence” in the attrition rates it cites. It attributes that partly to “potential bias” in Ukraine’s information sharing, and notes that casualty assessments “fluctuate according to the source.”

So, despite denials by the Pentagon, a document that shows a [higher](#) death toll on the Ukrainian side may be correct, since it has been widely reported that Russia has been firing several times the [number](#) of [artillery shells](#) as Ukraine, in a bloody war of [attrition](#) in which artillery appears to be the main instrument of death. Altogether, some of the documents estimate a total death toll on both sides approaching 100,000 and total casualties, killed and wounded, of up to 350,000.

Another document reveals that, after using up the stocks sent by NATO countries, Ukraine is [running out](#) of missiles for the S-300 and BUK systems that make up 89% of its air defenses. By May or June, Ukraine will therefore be vulnerable, for the first time, to the full strength of the Russian air force, which has until now been limited mainly to long-range missile strikes and drone attacks.

Recent Western arms shipments have been justified to the public by predictions that Ukraine will soon be able to launch new counter-offensives to take back territory from Russia. Twelve brigades, or up to 60,000 troops, were assembled to train on newly delivered Western tanks for this “spring offensive,” with three brigades in Ukraine and nine more in Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

But a leaked [document](#) from the end of February reveals that the nine brigades being equipped and trained abroad had less than half their equipment and, on average, were only 15% trained. Meanwhile, Ukraine faced a stark choice to either send reinforcements to Bakhmut or withdraw from the town entirely, and it chose to [sacrifice](#) some of its “spring offensive” forces to prevent the imminent fall of Bakhmut.

Ever since the U.S. and NATO started training Ukrainian forces to fight in Donbas in 2015, and while it has been training them in other countries since the Russian invasion, NATO has provided six-month training courses to bring Ukraine’s forces up to basic NATO standards. On this basis, it appears that many of the forces being assembled for the “spring offensive” would not be fully trained and equipped before July or August.

But another document says the offensive will begin around April 30th, meaning that many troops may be thrown into combat less than fully trained, by NATO standards, even as they have to contend with more severe shortages of ammunition and a whole new scale of Russian airstrikes. The incredibly bloody fighting that has already [decimated](#) Ukrainian forces will surely be even more brutal than before.

The leaked documents [conclude](#) that “enduring Ukrainian deficiencies in training and munitions supplies probably will strain progress and exacerbate casualties during the offensive,” and that the most likely outcome remains only modest territorial gains.

The documents also reveal serious deficiencies on the Russian side, deficiencies revealed by the failure of their winter offensive to take much ground. The fighting in Bakhmut has raged on for months, leaving thousands of fallen soldiers on both sides and a burned out city still not 100% controlled by Russia.

The inability of either side to decisively defeat the other in the ruins of Bakhmut and other

front-line towns in Donbas is why one of the most important documents [predicted](#) that the war was locked in a “grinding campaign of attrition” and was “likely heading toward a stalemate.” Adding to the concerns about where this conflict is headed is the [revelation](#) in the leaked documents about the presence of 97 special forces from NATO countries, including from the U.K. and the U.S. This is in addition to [previous reports](#) about the presence of CIA personnel, trainers and Pentagon contractors, and the unexplained [deployment](#) of 20,000 troops from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Brigades near the border between Poland and Ukraine.

Worried about the ever-increasing direct U.S. military involvement, Republican Congressman Matt Gaetz has introduced a [Privileged Resolution of Inquiry](#) to force President Biden to notify the House of the exact number of U.S. military personnel inside Ukraine and precise U.S. plans to assist Ukraine militarily.

We can't help wondering what President Biden's plan could be, or if he even has one. But it turns out that we're not alone. In what amounts to a [second leak](#) that the corporate media have studiously ignored, U.S. intelligence sources have told veteran investigative reporter [Seymour Hersh](#) that they are asking the same questions, and they describe a “total breakdown” between the White House and the U.S. intelligence community. Hersh's sources describe a pattern that echoes the use of fabricated and unvetted intelligence to justify U.S. aggression against Iraq in 2003, in which Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Sullivan are by-passing regular intelligence analysis and procedures and running the Ukraine War as their own private fiefdom. They reportedly smear all criticism of President Zelenskyy as “pro-Putin,” and leave U.S. intelligence agencies out in the cold trying to understand a policy that makes no sense to them.

What U.S. intelligence officials know, but the White House is doggedly ignoring, is that, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, top Ukrainian officials running this [endemically](#) corrupt country are making fortunes skimming money from the over \$100 billion in aid and weapons that America has sent them.

According to [Hersh's report](#), the CIA assesses that Ukrainian officials, including President Zelenskyy, have embezzled \$400 million from money the United States sent Ukraine to buy diesel fuel for its war effort, in a scheme that involves buying cheap, discounted fuel

from Russia

. Meanwhile, Hersh says, Ukrainian government ministries literally compete with each other to sell weapons paid for by U.S. taxpayers to private arms dealers in Poland, the Czech Republic and around the world.

Hersh writes that, in January 2023, after the CIA heard from Ukrainian generals that they were angry with Zelenskyy for taking a larger share of the rake-off from these schemes than his generals, CIA Director William Burns [went to](#) Kyiv to meet with him. Burns allegedly told Zelenskyy he was taking too much of the “skim money,” and handed him a list of 35 generals and senior officials the CIA knew were involved in this corrupt scheme.

Zelenskyy fired about ten of those officials, but failed to alter his own behavior. Hersh’s sources tell him that the White House’s lack of interest in doing anything about these goings-on is a major factor in the breakdown of trust between the White House and the intelligence community.

First-hand [reporting](#) from inside Ukraine by *New Cold War* has described the same systematic pyramid of corruption as Hersh. A member of parliament, formerly in Zelenskyy’s party, told *New Cold War* that Zelenskyy and other officials skimmed 170 million euros from money that was supposed to pay for Bulgarian artillery shells.

The corruption [reportedly](#) extends to bribes to avoid conscription. The *Open Ukraine* Telegram channel was told by a military recruitment office that it could get the son of one of its writers released from the front line in Bakhmut and sent out of the country for \$32,000. As has happened in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and all the wars the United States has been involved in for many decades, the longer the war goes on, the more the web of corruption, lies and distortions unravels.

The [torpedoing](#) of peace talks, the [Nord Stream sabotage](#), the [hiding](#) of corruption, the [politicization](#) of casualty figures, and the suppressed history of broken [promises](#) and prescient [warnings](#) about the danger of NATO expansion are all examples of how our leaders have distorted the

truth to shore up U.S. public support for perpetuating an unwinnable war that is killing a generation of young Ukrainians.

These leaks and investigative reports are not the first, nor will they be the last, to shine a light through the veil of propaganda that permits these wars to destroy young people's lives in faraway places, so that oligarchs in Russia, Ukraine and the United States can amass wealth and power.

The only way this will stop is if more and more people get active in opposing those companies and individuals that profit from war—who Pope Francis calls the Merchants of Death—and boot out the politicians who do their bidding, before they make an even more fatal misstep and start a nuclear war.