

## US 'Toolboxes' Are Empty

### Description

**The toolbox is empty. Russia knows this. Biden knows this. Blinken knows this. CNN knows this. The only ones who aren't aware of this are the American people**

by Scott Ritter via [Consortium News](#)

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U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in a hastily scheduled, 90-minute summit in Geneva yesterday, after which both sides lauded the meeting as worthwhile because it kept the door open for a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. What "keeping the door open" entails, however, represents two completely different realities.

For Blinken, the important thing appears to be process, continuing a dialogue which, by its very essence, creates the impression of progress, with progress being measured in increments of time, as opposed to results.

A results-oriented outcome was not in the books for Blinken and his entourage; the U.S. was supposed to submit a written response to Russia's demands for security guarantees as spelled out in a pair of draft treaties presented to the U.S. and NATO in December. Instead, Blinken told Lavrov the written submission would be provided next week.

In the meantime, Blinken primed the pump of expected outcomes by highlighting the possibility of future negotiations that addressed Russian concerns (on a reciprocal basis) regarding intermediate-range missiles and NATO military exercises.

But under no circumstances, Blinken said, would the U.S. be responding to Russian demands against NATO expanding to Ukraine and Georgia, and for the redeployment of NATO forces inside the territory of NATO as it existed in 1997.

Blinken also spent a considerable amount of time harping on the danger of a imminent military invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces said to be massing along the Ukraine-Russian border. He pointed out that any military incursion by Russia, not matter what size, that violated the territorial integrity of Ukraine, would be viewed as a continuation of the Russian "aggression" of 2014 and, as such, trigger "massive consequences" which would be damaging to Russia.

Blinken's restatement of a position he has pontificated on incessantly for more than a month now was not done for the benefit of Lavrov and the Russian government, but rather for an American and European audience which had been left scratching their collective heads over comments made the day before by President Joe Biden which suggested that the U.S. had a range of options it would consider

depending on the size of a Russian incursion.

“My guess is he [Russian President Vladimir Putin] will move in, he has to do something,” Biden said during a press briefing on Wednesday. While presenting a Russian invasion as inevitable, Biden went on to note that Putin “will be held accountable” and has “never have seen sanctions like the ones I promised will be imposed” if Russia were, in fact, to move against Ukraine. Biden spoke of deploying additional U.S. military forces to eastern Europe, as well as unspecified economic sanctions.

Biden then, however, hedged his remarks, noting that the scope and scale of any U.S. response would depend on what Russia did. “It’s one thing,” Biden said, “if it’s a minor incursion and we end up having to fight about what to do and not do.”

Almost immediately the Washington establishment went into overdrive to correct what everyone said was a “misstatement” by Biden, with Biden himself making a new statement the next day, declaring that he had been “absolutely clear with President Putin. He has no misunderstanding, any, any assembled Russian units move across the Ukrainian border, that is an invasion,” and that there should be “no doubt at all that if Putin makes this choice, Russia will pay a heavy price.”

And just in case the President was not clear enough, Blinken reiterated that point following his Friday meeting with Lavrov.

Immutable

The U.S. narrative about Russia and Ukraine was immutable; Russia was hell bent on invading, and there would be massive consequences if Russia acted out on its intent. This was no idle threat, Blinken said, but rather represented the unified position of the United States and its allies and partners.

Or was it? In a telling admission, CNN’s White House correspondent, John Harwood, stated that the “minor incursions” statement by Biden was harmless, because (Harwood said) Putin already knew through sources that this was, in fact, the U.S. position. As for Europe and Ukraine, their collective confusion and outrage was merely an act, a posture they had to take for public consumption, since the optics of Biden’s statement “sounds bad.”

In short, the lack of an agreed-upon strategy on how to deal with a Russian incursion/invasion of Ukraine was an open secret for everyone except the U.S. and European publics, who being fed a line of horse manure to assuage domestic political concerns over being seen as surrendering to Russian demands.

Biden and his administration are old hands at lying to the American public when it comes to matters of national security. One only need look to Biden’s July 23, 2021, phone call with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani for a clear precedent into this inability to speak openly and honestly about reality on the ground. “I need not tell you,” Biden told Ghani, “the perception around the world and in parts of Afghanistan, I believe, is that things are not going well in terms of the fight against the Taliban. And there is a need,” Biden added, “whether it is true or not, there is a need to project a different picture.”

This, in a nutshell, is the essence of the posture taken by the Biden administration on Ukraine. Blinken has indicated that the U.S. has a toolbox filled with options that will deliver “massive consequences” to Russia should Russia invade Ukraine. These “tools” include military options, such as the reinforcement

of NATO's eastern flank with additional U.S. troops, and economic options, such as shutting down the NordStream 2 pipeline and cutting Russia off from the SWIFT banking system. All these options, Blinken notes, have the undivided support of U.S. European allies and partners.

**The toolbox is everywhere, it seems—Biden has referred to it, as has White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki. Blinken has alluded to it on numerous occasions.**

**There's only one problem—the toolbox, it turns out, is empty.**

While the Pentagon is reportedly working on a series of military options to reinforce the existing U.S. military presence in eastern Europe, the actual implementation of these options would neither be timely nor even possible. One option is to move forces already in Europe; the U.S. Army maintains one heavy armored brigade in Europe on a rotational basis and has a light armored vehicle brigade and an artillery brigade stationed in Germany. Along with some helicopter and logistics support, that's it.

Flooding these units into Poland would be for display purposes only—they represent an unsustainable combat force that would be destroyed within hours, if not days, in any large-scale ground combat against a Russian threat.

The U.S. can deploy a second heavy armored brigade to Poland which would fall in on prepositioned equipment already warehoused on Polish soil. This brigade would suffer a similar fate if matched up against the Russian army. The U.S. can also deploy an airborne brigade. They, too, would die.

There are no other options available to deploy additional U.S. heavy forces to Europe on a scale and in a timeframe that would be meaningful. The problem isn't just the deployment of forces from their bases in the U.S. (something that would takes months to prepare for), but the sustainability of these forces once they arrived on the ground in Europe. Food, ammunition, water, fuel—the logistics of war is complicated, and not resolved overnight.

In short, there is no viable military option, and Biden knows this.

### Empty Sanctions Too

The U.S. has no sanctions plan that can survive initial contact with the enemy, which in this case is the collective weakness of the post-pandemic economies of both Europe and the U.S.; the over-reliance of Europe on Russian-sourced energy, and the vulnerability of democratically elected leaders to the whim of a consumer-based constituency. Russia can survive the impact of any sanctions regime the U.S. is able to scrape together—even those targeting the Russian banking system—far longer than Europe can survive without access to Russian energy.

This is a reality that Europe lives with, and while U.S. policy makers might think hard-hitting sanctions look good on paper, the reality is that whatever passes for U.S.-European unity today would collapse in rapid order when the Russian pipelines were shut down. The pain would not just be limited to Europe, either—the U.S. economy would suffer as well, with sky-high fuel prices and a stock market collapse that would put the U.S. into an economic recession, if not outright depression.

The political cost that would be incurred by Biden and, by extension, the Democrats, would be fatal to any hope that might remain for holding onto either house of Congress in 2022, or the White House in

2024. It would be one thing if Biden and his national security team were honest and forthright about the real consequences of declaring the equivalent of economic war on Russia. It is another thing altogether to speak only of the pain sanctions would cause Russia, with little thought, if any, to the real consequences that will be paid on the home front.

Americans should never forget that Russia has been laboring under severe U.S. sanctions since 2014, with zero effect. Russia knows what could be coming and has prepared. The American people wallow in their ignorance, believing at face value what they are told by the Biden administration, and echoed by a compliant mainstream media.

### Propaganda About 'Propaganda'

One of the great ironies of the current crisis is that, on the eve of the Blinken-Lavrov meeting in Geneva, the U.S. State Department published a report on Russian propaganda, decrying the role played by state-funded outlets such as RT and Sputnik in shaping public opinion in the United States and the West (in the interest of full disclosure, RT is one of the outlets that I write for.)

The fact that the State Department would publish such a report on the eve of a meeting which is all about propagating the big lie—that the U.S. has a plan for deterring “irresponsible Russian aggression”—while ignoring the hard truth: this is a crisis derived solely from the irresponsible policies of the U.S. and NATO over the past 30 years.

While a compliant mainstream American media unthinkingly repeated every warning and threat issued by Biden and Blinken to Russia over the course of the past few days, the Russian position has been largely ignored. Here's a reminder of where Russia stands on its demands for security guarantees: “We are talking about the withdrawal of foreign forces, equipment, and weapons, as well as taking other steps to return to the set-up we had in 1997 in non-NATO countries,” the Russian Foreign Ministry declared in a bulletin published after the Lavrov-Blinken meeting. “This includes Bulgaria and Romania.”

Blinken has already said the U.S. will reject this.

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The consequences of a U.S. rejection of Russia's demands will more than likely be war.

If you think the American people are ready to bear the burden of a war with Russia, think again.