

## The New Cuban Missile Crisis That Isn't

By Dmitri Orlov for the Saker blog, 3 November 2022

The Cuban Missile Crisis is a malicious misnomer. Cuba never had any nuclear missiles; it temporarily played host to some Soviet ones. The crisis started when Americans put their intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Turkey that posed a new threat to the Soviet Union, which responded by placing similar missiles in Cuba, evening the score. The Americans flew into a rage but eventually calmed down and withdrew their missiles from Turkey. The Soviets withdrew their missiles from Cuba and the crisis was over. And so it should be called the American Missile Crisis.

What's happening now couldn't be more different. Unless you spent the last few weeks hiding under a rock, you have probably heard that some sort of new nuclear crisis is underway because of "Putin's nuclear blackmail" or some such. Some people have suffered nervous exhaustion as a result, neglecting their duties and generally letting themselves go. Take former British PM Liz Truss, for instance. The poor silly thing latched on to Putin's words that "the wind rose can point in any direction" (a factual point about the utter uselessness of tactical nuclear weapons). She then allowed the British economy to go into free-fall while she obsessively tracked the wind direction over the Ukraine. It all ended badly for poor Liz. Don't be like Liz.

I am here to tell you that there is nothing going on beyond the usual—the usual Western propaganda fakery, that is.

In particular, this has nothing to do with anything Putin or with anything nuclear. Instead, this is all part of a desperate attempt to compensate for narrative failure, and a failed attempt at that. The problem for the collective West is simply this: 80% of the world's population has refused to join in condemning, sanctioning or otherwise punishing Russia, with some very large countries (China, India) either supportive or neutral on the subject.

Most of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, is carefully watching Russia systematically destroy what was by far the largest and most capable NATO-equipped, NATO-commanded army in the world (the Ukrainian army, that is), understanding full well that what is unfolding is Washington's Waterloo. Some countries (Saudi Arabia, for instance) are so sure of the result that they are already refusing to obey Washington's dictates. This is a problem, because all the Washingtonians know how to do is impose their will on the world. Treating others as equals or looking for opportunities to negotiate a win-win is simply not part of their core competence—or any of their competence, for that matter. Once defanged, all they know how to do is bark and drool.

To fix this problem, the narrative-mongers in Washington and Brussels have decided to play the nuclear card and accuse Russia of nuclear blackmail. Meanwhile, all that Russia has done is decimate the Ukrainian army several times over, then accept four former Ukrainian regions into the Russian Federation based on highly conclusive local referenda closely watched by a goodly number of international observers, and then announce that it will defend these regions against foreign attack by all means necessary. These, obviously, include nuclear means, since Russia does have them, and would use them in accordance with its nuclear doctrine, which precludes their first use.

Meanwhile, the US has no such stipulation in its nuclear doctrine, has actually used nuclear weapons against civilians (in Japan), and has for decades dreamed of developing a nuclear first strike capability that could not be countered. If any country should be judged to be a nuclear threat, it is the US, not Russia... except, as I will explain, the US is no longer much

of a nuclear threat either. Putin barely hinted at this, but a mere hint was enough to utterly infuriate the US national defense establishment, whose worst enemy is reality itself. Putin pointed out that at this point Russia has some weapons in its nuclear deterrent arsenal that are superior to that of the West.

These new weapons, of which more later, guarantee that any nuclear attack on Russia would be a suicidal move. That is, the West has no way of reliably destroying Russia (it is too big and its economic core is too independent and too well defended with air and space defense systems) while Russia can reliably destroy the West (which is not nearly as well defended) but will not do so unless the West attacks first. Unlike back in the old Soviet days, Russia has no missionary zeal; it is happy to sit back and watch the West starve itself (due to a lack of Russian chemical fertilizer) in the dark (due to a lack of Russian oil and gas). All it wants to do is gather the pieces of the shattered Russian world and all the people and lands that the collapse of the USSR abandoned behind some Bolshevik-decreed border. In this situation, the risk of a nuclear war is pretty much zero. Please sit back, take a series of deep breaths and let the good news soak in. Feel the joy.

But the joy probably won't last if you listen to craven idiots whose job is to lie to you about "Putin's nuclear threat." When, for instance, Jack Philips writes that Moscow has threatened to use... tactical nuclear weapons... in Ukraine to salvage its war there," he is basically just lying to us, and not once but thrice in the same sentence: Russia did not threaten to use tactical nuclear weapons but instead pointed out their uselessness; and Russia's special operation is a success. The fact that there is no threat is the main message of this article, but let us briefly digress and describe of Ukrainian victory and Russian defeat look like.

The Ukraine is victorious in that according to the IMF its GDP is down 35% in 2022; according to its national bank inflation has topped 30% and isn't slowing down; according to the World Bank next year 55% of Ukrainians will be below the poverty line, subsisting on less than \$2.15 per day; according to the Ukraine's economics minister, unemployment has reached 30%; according to its prime minister, it will be unable to pay pensions and salaries without immediate foreign aid; according to the UN, 20% of the population has left the country and another 33% are internally displaced; according to its energy ministry, it has already lost 40% of its electricity generating capacity. The Ukrainian army is drafting any male up to the age of 60, having run out of reservists, and the casualties it is suffering at the front are nothing short of horrific.

Meanwhile, Russia is vanquished because according to Reuters the Russian ruble is the strongest currency in the world; according to the Guardian Putin is more powerful and popular than ever; according to its agriculture ministry this year's grain harvest is over 150 million tonnes, 50 million of which are for export, making Russia the world's largest grain exporter; according to The Economist, Russia is emerging from recession just as the West is entering recession; and according to Goldman Sachs the index of economic activity in Russia is now higher than in the West. Russia just got done calling up 300 thousand, or 1%, of its trained and experienced reservists, who are now being drilled in the latest NATO-fighting techniques before being sent to the Ukrainian front.

But let's not let facts stand in the way of the dominant narrative: the Ukraine has to be winning and Russia has to be losing because otherwise what could possibly cause Russia to become so utterly desperate as to threaten the world with its nuclear weapons? That part is simple; what is less obvious is why Western propagandists are sufficiently desperate to concoct and promulgate the false narrative of "Putin's nuclear blackmail"?

The reason for all of this hectic propagandizing is that the collective West cannot hope to survive politically or economically unless Russia is brought to its knees and agrees to exchange its energy and mineral resources for freshly minted dollars that reside inside computers at Western central banks which can be confiscated at any time and for any reason. The situation is dire: the US is running through its Strategic Petroleum Reserve at breakneck pace, yet facing a shortage of diesel fuel and stubbornly high gasoline prices. It has a massive debt to roll over and expand but can only do so through direct money-printing, driving inflation, already at over 10%, ever higher. Europe is bracing for a harsh winter of ridiculously high energy bills, industry shutdowns and massive unemployment, while the US is not far behind. The fracking bonanza in the US was never quite profitable and now has perhaps a year or two before it is tapped out. Then the dream of US liquefied natural gas replacing Russian pipeline gas in Europe, never a realistic plan, will be dead for good while industry shutdowns spread to the US.

To avoid this scenario, desperate measures have been applied, and all of them have failed. First there was the plan of sanctions from hell, forcing numerous Western companies to stop shipping product to Russia and doing business there. This has done great harm to Western companies while providing Russia with an opening to steal their market share. What couldn't be replaced with domestic production has been replaced with "parallel imports" via third countries.

Next, the West (Europe in particular) curtailed its Russian energy imports through a number of means, from sanctions against Russian tankers, to bans on the use of existing pipeline capacity through the Ukraine and through Poland, to outright terrorist strikes on Russian gas pipelines in the Baltic. An outright ban on Russian oil imports to the European Union is scheduled for December, and it will make the situation predictably worse. The result is that Russia has started shipping oil and gas to its partners in Asia instead, China in particular, and the West is now welcome to compete for this energy on the spot market, while spare supplies last. They won't. Because of higher prices, Russia is exporting less energy but earning more foreign revenue.

And so an ingenuous plan was hatched for a nuclear provocation in the Ukraine. The Ukrainians, with some US and British help, were to take an old Soviet-era ballistic missile (a Tochka-U), load it up with nuclear waste from one of the Ukraine's nuclear power plants, blow it up somewhere in the Chernobyl exclusion zone (which is already contaminated with long-lived radionuclides) and then Western media and diplomatic sources would all wax hysterical and blame it all on Russia in unison, hoping that at least some of the countries around the world that have been refusing to join Western sanctions against Russia would be cajoled into joining them.

How well did it go? Not at all well, apparently! First, Russian intelligence got the details on the whole operation from an inside source or two or three. This is not surprising, since no self-respecting nuclear engineer would be too excited to take responsibility for such a travesty. Second, Russia's defense minister Sergei Shoigu, under direct orders from Putin, made phone calls to his counterparts throughout the world, sharing this evidence with them. Third, Russia specifically requested that the IAEA go and investigate the two Ukrainian sites at which the travesty was being concocted. The end result is that the Ukrainians are now hurriedly destroying the evidence and covering their tracks. Considering that every gram of such highly controlled substances must be inventoried and its every movement logged, this coverup may come to involve some incidents, accidents and force majeure circumstances. A nasty little accident involving a teacup of nuclear waste and a firecracker is not to be ruled out, to be blamed on Russia, of course.

Meanwhile, in the real world of nuclear superpower standoffs, two interesting events took place. On Thursday, October 20, 2022, the American nuclear sub West Virginia, an Ohio-class sub that carries 24 Trident II ballistic missiles, each of which carries 10 nuclear charges, surfaced in the Arabian Sea and was visited by Michael Kurilla, commander of United States Central Command. I imagine that he lined up the crew on deck, stood before them in navy dress whites, then dropped his pants down and did a little “milk, milk, lemonade, round the corner fudge is made” routine... because he might as well have. The purpose of a nuclear sub is to be stealthy because Russian air defense systems can intercept Trident II missiles especially well if they know where they are coming from. Thus, the act of surfacing and holding parades on deck basically announces to the world that the sub is off-duty for the time being.

Why would the Americans do this? Is this a clumsy peace gesture, a cryptic act of surrender or a veiled cry for help? Or are they all going senile because whatever Biden has got is infectious? It is hard for us to tell. Whatever it is, the Russians seem unaffected. The Russian nuclear sub Belgorod recently sailed off into the blue, causing a bit of a panic within NATO. It carries a number of the new Poseidon nuclear-powered drone torpedos, which are all about the number 100. Each of them carries a charge of 100 megatons. Poseidons have almost infinite range, move at around 100 km/h at a depth of 1000m (three times deeper than any nuclear sub) and when detonated near an underwater coastal ridge can raise a 100-meter tsunami. Just five of them are sufficient to demolish both coasts of the US and all of Northern Europe. These would be underwater nuclear tests conducted in international waters—antisocial, yes, but not exactly direct nuclear strikes on anyone’s territory, so hardly a *casus belli*. And the ensuing tsunami? Uh-oh! Oopsie-daisy, sorry about that! Nobody is going to write “in case of tsunami destroy Russia” into the US nuclear doctrine. Best of all, Poseidons can lie in wait for years, surfacing periodically to receive new orders. But if Russia is destroyed they will rise up and destroy the rest of the world world, because “What use is the world if there is no Russia in it?” (V. Putin)

We can be sure that the Russians won’t launch a nuclear war because it’s risky and they don’t have to take that risk in order to win. We can be sure that the Americans won’t launch one because it would be suicide. And so we can all sit back and relax while the “Putin’s nuclear blackmail” narrative-mongers bark their stupid heads off. As for all those assorted media whores who are scaring people with their nuclear nonsense in order to catch some hype—shame on them!