

90 Seconds to Midnight?

By Scott Ritter, 23 January 2023

A clear signal to the US leadership that there will be no survivors in any nuclear exchange between the US and Russia

The Russian guided missile frigate, the Admiral Gorshkov, is in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, ostensibly heading toward the east coast of the United States, part of a planned journey which began on 4 January 2023 and is expected to transit the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean Sea. The Admiral Gorshkov is outfitted with 16 vertical launch tubes, each of which, in theory, could be armed with nuclear-capable Zircon hypersonic missiles capable of covering 1,000 kilometers in less than 10 minutes.

To put it bluntly, soon Russia will be in a position where a single ship could, in a matter of minutes, fire 16 nuclear armed hypersonic missiles at the United States which not only cannot be intercepted by anything in the US arsenal, but also would impact their respective targets before any meaningful evacuation could be conducted. It is, literally, a decapitation weapon.

Current Russian nuclear doctrine does not allow for a nuclear first strike; indeed, Russian President Vladimir Putin has made it clear that Russia would not be the first nation to use nuclear weapons in any future nuclear conflict. But he also emphasized that Russia would not be the second, either, meaning that Russia would release its nuclear arsenal without waiting for any US first strike to impact Russian soil.

The Admiral Gorshkov is sending a clear signal to the US leadership that there will be no survivors in any nuclear exchange between the US and Russia.

Amid this muscle flexing, the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a disarmament advocacy group founded in 1945 by Albert Einstein and University of Chicago scientists who helped develop the first atomic weapons in the Manhattan Project, and which currently maintains what is known as the “Doomsday Clock” that reflects the risk of nuclear conflict, decided to move the hands of the clock ten seconds forward from the current 100 seconds to midnight. In a statement announcing this decision, “A time of unprecedented danger: It is 90 seconds to midnight,” the board declared the following:

“The war in Ukraine may enter a second horrifying year, with both sides convinced they can win. Ukraine’s sovereignty and broader European security arrangements that have largely held since the end of World War II are at stake. Also, Russia’s war on Ukraine has raised profound questions about how states interact, eroding norms of international conduct that underpin successful responses to a variety of global risks.

“And worst of all, Russia’s thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons remind the world that escalation of the conflict—by accident, intention, or miscalculation—is a terrible risk. The possibility that the conflict could spin out of anyone’s control remains high.”

The ignorance of this statement is manifest. What the Board calls “Russia’s war on Ukraine” ignores the fact-based historical truth that the Ukraine conflict was, and is, solely the byproduct of a concerted plan by the United States and NATO to use Ukraine as a foil to generate conflict designed to bring down the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

This plan has been in place since at least 2008, when the former US Ambassador to Russia (and current Director of the CIA), William Burns, warned that any effort by NATO to bring Ukraine into its ranks would precipitate an eventual Russian military intervention. Despite this stark warning, NATO extended an invitation to Ukraine in November 2008, clearly initiating a known cause-effect relationship that defined NATO’s policy toward Russia as being one which sought a proxy conflict using Ukraine as a stand-in for NATO.

This policy as furthered by the US, EU and NATO all acting in concert to precipitate a coup in Ukraine in February 2014 designed to oust the constitutionally elected president, Victor Yanukovich, and replace him with a new, ultra-nationalist government dominated by adherents of the odious ideology of Stepan Bandera. The coup succeeded, and in April the new Ukrainian government declared war on the ethnic Russian population of the Donbas. This action triggered the Russian annexation of Crimea and the provision of military support by Russia to the Donbas, triggering the very military intervention William Burns had warned about six years prior.

Ukraine and its NATO allies then sued for peace, initiating negotiations that led to the adoption of the Minsk Agreement, which put in place a ceasefire in exchange for guarantees regarding Ukrainian sovereignty over the Donbas as well as relative autonomy for the ethnic Russians of the Donbas, protecting their language, religion, culture, and traditions.

The Minsk Accords floundered for eight years, with Ukraine failing to implement the required constitutional changes necessary to secure the rights of the ethnic Russians of the Donbas. The reasons for this delay are today well known, thanks to the public confessions of former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and former French President Francois Hollande, all three signatories to the accords. These three national leaders have acknowledged that the Minsk Accords were simply a sham designed by Ukraine to buy time to build a NATO proxy military capable of reclaiming both the Donbas and Crimea.

Russia's decision to invade Ukraine on February 24, 2022 was not an unprovoked act of aggression, but rather a legitimate exercise of its right, together with the newly independent republics of Lugansk and Donetsk, of preemptive collective self-defense in the face of the imminent threat of aggression by Ukraine's newly trained army which was, by design, little more than a NATO proxy.

The fact that the esteemed members of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists - which includes among its ranks ten Nobel laureates - seem ignorant of this history, colors their ability to comprehend the true nature of the threat facing the world today, and from whence that threat comes.

The United States, having deliberately provoked a pre-meditated conflict with Russia, is now trying to implement a two-tracked policy designed to trigger a Maidan-like moment in Moscow (named after Maidan Square, in Kiev, where US-backed neo-Nazi's staged a violent coup against former Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich) where the Russian population would rise up against the government of President Vladimir Putin, overthrowing him and installing a pro-western leader who would return Russia to the colonial-like existence of the 1990's, when Boris Yeltsin allowed the collective west to rape Russia economically and dominate Russia politically.

The two-tracks of this policy involve the imposition of economic sanctions linked to Russia's decision to militarily intervene in Ukraine, and the prosecution of a proxy conflict in Ukraine designed to bleed Russia white. The goal of this policy is to engender massive unrest among a demoralized Russian population which would in turn rise and remove President Putin from power.

The insanity of such a plan is incomprehensible. Imagine for a moment that Russia embarked on a plan of action designed to strip away Mexico from the US sphere of influence and, in doing so, promulgated a conflict the goal of which was to have Mexico re-take by force the territory encompassing the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. The idea that the United States would sit idly in the face of such a threat is ludicrous. So, too, is any concept that Russia should do the same.

A quick history lesson for the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists:

- It was the US, not Russia, that withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile and Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaties.
- It is the US, not Russia, that has frozen talks on the extension of the New Strategic Arms Treaty.
- It is the US, not Russia, that has recently promulgated a nuclear posture policy which allows for the preemptive use of nuclear weapons in a non-nuclear scenario.
- It is the US, not Russia, that has deployed a low-yield (i.e., “usable”) nuclear warhead (the W-76-2) on Trident submarine launched ballistic missiles, and conducted war games where the Secretary of Defense has practiced the communications procedures necessary to launch this weapon where Russia was the named target of the missile.
- It is the US, not Russia, that is building a Ukrainian proxy army designed by intent to be able to capture territory Russia claims as its own (the four former Ukrainian provinces annexed by Russia in September 2022, and Crimea), knowing full well that one of the triggers for release of Russian nuclear weapons is any conventional military force that threatens the existential survival of Russia.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists would have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know these underlying facts, and not to see them as truth.

Which means they are complicit in the nuclear terror being perpetrated by the United States, and indifferent to the consequences thereof.

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists is therefore fundamentally wrong in its assessment of it being 90 seconds until midnight.

The truth is the world is one second to midnight, and the clock can strike at any time, something the presence of the Admiral Gorshkov off the coast of the United States proves only too well.