

U.S. Intelligence Community Sending Mixed Messages On Ukraine

By Larry Johnson Sept., 2023



The U.S. Intelligence Community is not a monolith. It is more like a feudal society. The big three Feudal lords for intelligence analysis are the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). All three produce “raw intelligence” — the CIA’s case officers produce reports from foreigners who have agreed to work in secret for the United States, the NSA scoops up all forms of electronic intelligence (e.g., phone calls, emails) and the DIA produces reports from U.S. Defense Attaches assigned to U.S. embassies around the world. Each jealously guards its own product and the employees of these three agencies can be considered the vassals. (Gots to have a vassal if you’re a feudal lord.)

Then there is the Director of National Intelligence (aka DNI). This position/office was created in the aftermath of 9-11 and is supposed to “manage” and “coordinate” all members of the Intelligence Community.

The standard solution in Washington, DC is to create another layer of bureaucracy to solve a failure of already behemoth bureaucracies who rarely cooperate. The reality is something else — the Big 3 do not always kow tow to the DNI. I am hearing that the CIA and the DIA are doing a pretty good job of reporting honestly what is taking place on the ground in Ukraine — i.e., Ukraine is suffering terrible casualties and the counter offensive is failing. Unfortunately, as Sy Hersh has reported previously, Biden and his

National Security team are ignoring those intelligence reports and are embracing “analysis” coming out of the Office of the DNI.

The DNI reportedly is proffering the meme that Ukraine is grinding down the Russian military and that the United States and NATO only need to be patient and wait for Russia’s inevitable collapse. Some of the U.S. military leaders — who are flat out ignorant of Russia’s recent history in dealing with a domestic radical Islamic insurgency — firmly believe that Russia cannot win a military victory over Ukraine, that the war is a stalemate and the Russia will be bogged down for years battling Bandera insurgents.

The leaders of the USIC and the military still believe in their initial conclusion that Russia is weak because it did not steamroll through Ukraine and rout Zelensky off 12 months ago. They attribute Russia’s “failure” to inept and corrupt bureaucrats keen on reining in the Russian military. Putin also gets a heavy share of the blame by these leaders for allegedly not listening to the Russian military leaders and Wagner chiefs to do what is necessary to achieve victory. Putin and his team are seen in the West as weak, control freaks who block the military from taking off the white gloves and making the magic happen.

Because the US intelligence and military leaders are looking at the war in Ukraine through this prism, the analysts and their managers, for the most part, face enormous pressure to conclude that Russia is a feckless and incompetent near-peer adversary and cannot last.

I continue to believe that the assumptions about Russia’s alleged failure is ignoring the contravening narrative:

- The Russian economy is robust and healthy despite Western sanctions.
- Russia’s political influence in the world is growing, not shrinking. BRICS is a case in point.
- Russia is inflicting enormous casualties on Ukraine’s military and decimating infrastructure critical to the Ukrainian military campaign.
- Russia’s defense industry has ramped up to levels of production that the West cannot match.
- Russia’s seemingly unlimited access to natural resources, energy and rare earth minerals strengthens Russia’s military position in the world.
- Russia enjoys a massive technological advantage over NATO in terms of electronic warfare, air defense systems, mine laying vehicles and hypersonic missiles.
- Russian leaders and their people genuinely believe they face an existential threat from the West.
- Ukraine is totally dependent on the West to provide money and weapons to continue to fight.

The refusal of Western leaders, especially the Biden crew, to entertain this alternative narrative is creating more risk with each passing day. False or mistaken assumptions about why Russia is doing what it is doing carries

an enormous risk of miscalculation on the part of the United States and its NATO allies.

Ukraine's ability to sustain the on-going counter offensive diminishes with each passing day. Reports that the West is going to pressure Ukraine to go on a complete, mobilized war footing and train a new army of 300,000 men is delusional. Unlike Russia, which outnumbers Ukraine by a factor of at least 8, Ukraine does not have a healthy, young pool of potential recruits. Even if Zelensky and his Generals could mobilize 300k or more, where are they going to train and how much training will they really receive. New recruits assigned to operate battle tanks are looking at a training cycle of at least 12 months just to acquire minimal competence to maneuver and fire. If they start in October those new bodies would not be ready until September 2024 at the earliest.

All of this talk of Ukrainian mobilization and new training ignores the fact that Russia will have a say in the matter. Moscow will not be sitting still. **Russia's plethora of long range fires, for example, means that there is no secure training base in Ukraine. Training will have to be done at multiple locations in Europe and there are growing signs that Europe's leaders are tired of hosting Ukrainian recruits. And there is the prospect looming over NATO and Ukraine that Russia will launch its own offensive to further weaken Ukraine's ability to resist and capture new territory.**

One other major questionable assumption — the rest of the world stays quiet and there are no other foreign policy crises that distract America and/or Europe. Given the coups in Africa and tensions with China, that does not seem to be a safe bet.