

Zaporozhye Nuclear Plant Scare: London's RUSI Shapes NATO Policy

by Richard Freeman

June 30—The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a British command post, has inserted itself into the British-American-NATO policy-making process; its April 28 [report](#), “Dangerous Targets: Civilian Nuclear Infrastructure and the War in Ukraine,” appears to be a governing policy-planning guidance overview the West is now following to escalate the Ukraine conflict, over a supposed Russian destruction of the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).

The report states that,

Russia may manufacture a radiological incident at the ZNPP or another facility to spoil a Ukrainian offensive. [The West should] make clear to Russia that any such incident would be followed by a massive response to mitigate damage.

Under the RUSI scenario of escalation, allies of Ukraine might offer military “personnel” to Ukraine, the policy paper says—which would lead to a direct confrontation with NATO.

RUSI effectively wrote the script for the resolution that U.S. Senators Lindsay Graham (R-SC) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced June 22, stating that if Russia used nuclear weapons in Ukraine, it would be “at war with NATO.” Blumenthal added that Russia would face “total obliteration by NATO forces.” Graham specifically writes on his website:

[The] resolution views ... the destruction of a nuclear facility, dispersing radioactive contami-

nants into NATO territory causing significant harm to human life, as an attack on NATO requiring an immediate response, including the implementation of Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.

RUSI's policy appeared to be behind the June 23 *New Statesman* article in which Kyrylo Budanov, who leads Ukraine's Main Directorate Military Intel-



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The Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant in southeastern Ukraine, the largest in Europe. Under a scenario cooked up by the British monarchy's Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a supposed Russian destruction of this plant might lead to a direct confrontation with NATO.

ligence, lied that “Russia has finished preparations for an attack on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant,” that would “bring ... about a nuclear accident.” The *Times* of London headlined its June 22 story, “Zelensky Warns of Plot To Blow Up Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.”

RUSI's “Dangerous Targets” report states that a direct strike on the Zaporozhye NPP reactor or its dry



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U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal (l.) and Lindsey Graham (r.), following a RUSI script, introduced a resolution into the Senate asserting that should Russia use nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Russia would be “at war” with NATO. Here, they surround Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky, July 7, 2022.

spent-fuel storage may not cause a radiological explosion, because the ZNPP design is more advanced than that of the earlier Chernobyl NPP:

An accidental hit on a reactor unit or a dry spent-fuel storage facility, under the current state of military activity around Ukrainian NPP’s, is unlikely to cause a major radiological incident. The reactors currently operating at Ukrainian NPP’s are located within reinforced containment structures ... designed to withstand significant internal and external hazards, including fires, explosions, earthquakes and radioactive release from other accidents.

RUSI asserts that only effectively ‘bunker-busting’ or hypersonic missiles could penetrate the containment structures. *EIR* has not verified these statements.

The Royal Institute then locates the plant’s vulnerabilities, such as “wet spent fuel” facilities, where spent nuclear fuel inside a reactor is withdrawn and stored in pool-type wet storage facilities. Another vulnerability is cooling water. The report points out that the ZNPP draws cooling water from a reservoir formed by the Kakhovka Dam, which was destroyed in the early hours

of June 6, wiping out the reservoir. The ZNPP is drawing down water from an on-site cooling pond. On June 10, the last of the several reactors at ZNPP was shut down. But the RUSI team travelled to Ukraine in March 2023, the report asserts, where it interviewed “a recent ZNPP employee,” a “senior expert with intimate knowledge of ZNPP operations,” and a number of participants and technical personnel from other Ukrainian nuclear plants, which would give RUSI knowledge of where the vulnerabilities are.

No Evidence, Just ‘an Opportune Moment’

The report then fantasizes:

This could provide an opportune moment for Russia to manufacture a crisis.... The

question is whether Russia convinces itself that it stands to benefit from causing a radiological incident at a Ukrainian NPP. The risk to the lives of its own personnel or Ukrainian civilians is unlikely to deter it from such a course of action. Although there is no evidence that a decision has been made in Moscow to carry out direct nuclear sabotage, variations of this kind of behavior are widely discussed among Russian officials, including those in senior positions relating to the conduct of Russia’s occupation.

The “Dangerous Targets” report makes a series of recommendations for safety and security at the plant, some of which are normal. However, it then makes Recommendation 9:

Establish deterrence against a deliberately manufactured radiological incident by making clear to Russia that any such incident would be followed by a massive response to mitigate damage, and expanded support for Ukraine’s war effort. As discussed earlier, Russia may judge a radiological incident in the event of its withdrawal from the ZNPP to be an

attractive option—a serious yet controllable escalation.

Deterrence must therefore be established by making clear that any such incident will have consequences that are contrary to Russia's interests. The best means of doing this would be for Ukraine's international partners to emphasize that a major radiological incident at the ZNPP will lead to the deployment of international CBRN [Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear] troops to assist Ukraine in dealing with the response—and that an attack on these troops will be considered an attack on the states that deployed them.

Thus, Russia must believe that any such incident will not reduce the international community's support for Ukraine. Instead, such an incident would be the basis for expanded support for Kyiv and the direct offer of assistance by deployed personnel from Ukraine's partners. Given that the Russian leadership knows that it is not able to confront NATO forces, such a position should deter it from believing that Russia could control the consequences of any such action, and therefore undermine any calculus that favors rewards over risks.

That is, after a NATO-Ukrainian manufactured incident, CBRN troops under NATO direction would enter the plant area. The incident would be the basis for na-



MSC/Kuhlmann
Malcolm Chalmers, Deputy Director-General of RUSI, believes Russia could be forced to back down in Crimea in a nuclear confrontation with NATO.

tions which sent the troops, most of them NATO members, to deploy “personnel,” i.e., troops, to Ukraine's assistance.

RUSI's Crimea/Black Sea Confrontation

The minds that dreamed up this provocation may have other routes to forcing a confrontation. In a RUSI [report](#) of May 20, 2022, entitled “This War Still Presents Nuclear Risks—Especially in Relation to Crimea,” Malcolm Chalmers, its deputy director, methodically discussed how Russia could be forced into a nuclear confrontation with

NATO in Crimea, from which, he assumed, Russia would ultimately back down.

These mad schemers are closely linked to the British royal household. The long-standing President of RUSI is His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent. The Duke of Kent is Prince Edward of the House of Windsor, first cousin of the late Queen Elizabeth, and also a first cousin of the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In the inner circle of the family, Prince Edward is one of a handful of people authorized to speak on behalf of the Windsors. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last British viceroy of India, years ago led a campaign to elevate the status of RUSI, of which he was a leading member. Mountbatten played an important role in King Charles's upbringing until Charles was 21 years old.



CC/UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent, President of RUSI.

On the British Intelligence side, John Scarlett, head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) from 2004 to 2009, served as RUSI Deputy Chairman from 2016 until 2021.