

The New York Times deploys C.J. Chivers to Ukraine

Patrick Martin
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A particularly foul and provocative article in the *New York Times* this weekend portrays the Russian military forces and pro-Russian militiamen in Crimea as a rampaging horde, using guns and whips to suppress popular opposition to a possible annexation of the Crimean region by Russia.

Under the headline, “Russia Moves Swiftly to Stifle Dissent Ahead of Secession Vote,” the language of the article is vintage Cold War anticommunism, with references to the “Orwellian flair” of the pro-Russian Crimean regime, its “implicit threat of force,” “targeted intimidation,” and “strong-arm tactics,” combined with “the trappings of the election-season carnivals that have long accompanied rigged ballots across the old Soviet world.”

While the *Times* presents the fascist thugs who spearheaded the overthrow of the Ukrainian government last month in Kiev as fighters for democracy, or, at worst, “nationalists,” Sunday’s article describes the pro-Russian forces in Crimea as “vigilantes,” “masked men in assorted camouflage, Kalashnikov rifles in hand,” or in even more unflattering terms.

One of the two *Times* journalists bylined on the article, and by far the senior correspondent involved, is one C. J. Chivers, about whom the WWSW has previously had occasion to write. (See: “A not-so-quiet American: New York Times reporter writes on Central Asia”)

The dispatch of Chivers to Ukraine, where he is both writing and posting on Instagram, is a demonstration of the complete integration of the *New York Times* into the operations of American imperialism. Where Chivers goes, US spies, provocateurs and Special Forces operatives have generally gone before, and the job of the *Times* correspondent is both to glorify and, in many

cases, facilitate their activities.

There has long been a close relationship between the leading US daily newspaper and the military-intelligence apparatus of the American government. But in the case of Chivers, the ties appear to be even closer.

Over the past 12 years, his byline has appeared over on-the-spot reports on the activities of US-backed guerrillas, insurgents and “dissidents” throughout the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and North Africa. He was embedded with US combat troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq, traveled through Central Asia profiling petro-dictators being cultivated by Washington, and reported from the front lines of US-backed forces in Libya and Syria. Now he appears in Ukraine and Crimea.

The Syrian assignment was particularly remarkable because it involved Chivers traveling for weeks with a group of Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas calling themselves the Lions of Tawhid, part of the Al-Nusra Front, which has pledged loyalty to Al Qaeda while working as part of the US-backed force fighting the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Chivers not only “witnessed Tawhid fighters using a prisoner as an unwitting suicide bomber,” as the *Times* delicately put it, but actively promoted the group in a video that he narrated. One article by Chivers cites praise for the leader of the group, after he was killed in the fighting, describing him as a “great man.”

Chivers’ preparation for his role as the *Times* representative to countless wars and insurgencies is certainly unusual. He joined the Marine Corps after graduation from college, fought in the 1990-1991 Gulf War, rose to the rank of captain, trained as an Army Ranger, and participated in military operations in Los Angeles after the 1992 riots set off by the beating of

black motorist Rodney King.

After nearly a decade in the military, he went to Columbia University journalism school and began a meteoric career as a reporter, starting with the *Providence Journal* in Rhode Island in 1996 before moving to the *Times* in 1999, where he covered the New York Police Department for three years and then became a foreign correspondent, rising quickly to Moscow bureau chief.

Chivers frequently produces articles drawing on specialized knowledge of military ordnance, small-unit guerrilla tactics and intelligence operations, which evince a lockstep alignment with both the overall strategic objectives of American imperialism and the specific tactical initiatives being carried out from day to day.

In an interview with the Baton Rouge, Louisiana *Advocate* in 2005, Chivers explained how his military and Special Forces training informs his reporting: “I meet former Marines and Rangers all the time, almost everywhere, and we often find a sense among us of common understanding, a set of common memories, a group of ideals and exasperations we share. It has happened in Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Germany, Russia, you name it.”

It requires little imagination to surmise the nature of the “common understanding” and “ideals” Chivers shares with his former comrades, or what former Marines and Rangers might be doing in these countries.



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