

# Mariupol killings: US backs Ukrainian regime's reign of terror

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With the open support of Washington and its European allies, the regime installed by Washington and Berlin in last February's fascist-led putsch is now extending its reign of terror against all popular resistance in Ukraine. That is the significance of the events in the major eastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol yesterday.

After tanks, armoured personnel carriers and heavily armed troops were unleashed on unarmed civilians in the city, the Kiev regime claimed to have killed some 20 people. The Obama administration immediately blamed the violent repression on "pro-Russian separatists."

The violence bore all the hallmarks of a calculated provocation on the 69th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany by the Soviet Red Army. "Victory Day," long a day of celebration and pride among Russian and Ukrainian workers, who made immense sacrifices to end the Nazi war of extermination in the east, is hated and despised by the neo-Nazi gangs that propelled the US puppet regime in Kiev into power. These admirers of Hitler and his Ukrainian collaborators are now serving, with Washington's full support, as the regime's shock troops against popular opposition centred in the industrialised east of the country as well as in Russian-speaking centres such as Odessa in the south.

The same forces have been given free rein to attack anyone in the west of the country who dares to oppose the fascist government in Kiev.

Outraged accounts from residents of Mariupol, verified by journalists on the ground, make it clear that many of those targeted by the Ukrainian National Guard and associated fascist elements on Friday had been participating in a Victory Day rally commemorating the anniversary.

Participants in the rally came to the defence of police officers who were barricaded inside the local Interior Ministry building after refusing to fire on civilians. Kiev's armed forces then assaulted the building, using heavy weaponry and tanks, and turned their weapons on residents who flocked to the scene. Later, in scenes reminiscent of last week's massacre in Odessa, the building was torched. Government troops then evacuated the city along streets lined with incensed and jeering residents.

Video footage, photos and eye-witness accounts appearing on social media show tanks and armoured personnel carriers

rampaging through city streets and parks, and troops confronting residents.

Other postings document Ukrainian forces setting fire to the police building in which officers were barricaded and opening fire on unarmed protesters.

At yesterday's US State Department press briefing, responding to a reporter's question about the "worrying escalation of the violence" witnessed in Mariupol, spokeswoman Jen Psaki blamed opponents of the Kiev regime, declaring: "Well, we condemn the outbreak of violence caused by pro-Russia separatists this morning in Mariupol, which has resulted in multiple deaths."

Her remarks, underscoring Washington's support for the repression, came after Ukraine's interim interior minister, Arsen Avakov, gloated on his Facebook page that security forces had killed about 20 "terrorists"—the regime's term for all those who have opposed the Kiev putsch.

According to Mariupol health officials, at least seven people were killed and 39 injured, some seriously.

Once again, as with last week's atrocity in Odessa, the US and Western media sought to obscure the facts of what happened on the streets of Mariupol, a large working class port city of half a million people. Vague reports of "clashes with separatists" whitewashed the escalation of the unelected Kiev regime's military-fascist offensive in eastern Ukraine.

CNN, for example, cited Ukrainian authorities for its report that "at least seven people were killed and 39 others were injured in clashes between separatists and Ukrainian government forces in the flashpoint southeastern city of Mariupol."

Such reports stand in stark contrast to the multitude of social media postings of the military violence and the involvement of fascist elements. "The National Guard went to war with local police," local anti-fascist committee representative Pyotr Komissarov told the Russian media outlet RT. Neo-Nazi Right Sector elements were identified, he said, and described the attackers as "volunteers, mercenaries" from central and western parts of the country.

Ukrainian MP Oleg Lyashko, who represents the ultra-nationalist Radical Party, claimed on his Facebook account that Kiev's forces had orders "not to take anyone alive." During the

assault on the Interior Ministry building in Mariupol, he wrote: “Terrorists are barricaded inside and are now returning fire. An order has been issued not to take anyone alive.”

Earlier in the week, Lyashko posted photographs on his blog of him personally interrogating Igor Kakidzyanov, the self-proclaimed defence minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic, who was captured by Ukrainian forces on Tuesday. Kakidzyanov had been stripped to his underwear and had his hands tied behind his back.

None of this naked military-fascist killing and terror would be possible without the protection and immunity provided by Washington and Berlin. Kiev’s bloody crackdown began after visits and discussions with the regime by CIA Director John Brennan and US Vice President Joseph Biden.

In her State Department briefing, Psaki revealed that Secretary of State John Kerry held a phone call yesterday morning, just as the events in Mariupol were unfolding, with acting Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk. According to Psaki, “Prime Minister Yatsenyuk provided an update on the security situation on the ground, efforts to maintain calm, and preparations for the election”—a reference to the presidential poll planned for May 25 to try to legitimise the regime.

The US is overseeing and directing the crimes being carried out in Ukraine by its puppet regime in Kiev.

Psaki’s State Department briefing underscored Washington’s patent double standard. The Obama administration hailed as heroes of democracy the fascist Right Sector and Svoboda party forces who mounted armed protests, seized government buildings and fired on security forces to destabilise and overthrow the elected government of President Viktor Yanukovich last February. The White House declared at the time that Yanukovich had forfeited his legitimacy by mobilising police and security forces against the armed demonstrators.

Now, Washington denounces anti-government protesters who have seized official buildings in the east as Russian agents, echoing the Kiev government’s attack on them as “terrorists.” It backs the government’s use not just of police, but of tanks, troops, helicopter gunships and fascist thugs organised in the “National Guard” and “special units” to murder the regime’s opponents.

This is the second time in a week that the Obama administration has defended the role of the Kiev government in the murder of anti-government demonstrators, having done so following the Odessa killings (see: “US defends role of Kiev regime and fascists in Odessa massacre”).

Desperate to reach an accommodation with Washington, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday urged pro-Russian eastern Ukrainians to abandon planned separatist or autonomy referenda set for Sunday. But these efforts have been rebuffed by Washington.

Putin is unable to control the resistance that has spread across eastern Ukraine, with separatist spokesmen denouncing him as

a “coward” and “traitor” for issuing his call.

It is clear, despite the non-stop flood of propaganda and lies from the Western governments and their compliant media, that the opposition to the Kiev regime in the east is broadly based and indigenous. There is deep hostility, particularly in the working class, to the resurgence of the fascist threat, which is associated with the deaths of millions during World War II. And there is widespread anger over appalling levels of unemployment and poverty throughout the industrial centres of Ukraine two decades on from the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

“We are on the brink of an uprising of poor against rich, of chaos, of a terrifying rebellion,” Sergei Chertkov, a regional administration official in the eastern town of Konstantinovka, told the *Guardian*. “America, Russia, Europe, the politicians in Kiev, everyone has tried to play their games here, and they have played so hard that now we are on the brink of catastrophe.”

Fearful that Ukraine’s descent into civil war could trigger a working-class movement against his own oligarchic regime, Putin is resorting to Russian nationalism and chauvinism to shore up his position, fueling precisely the divisions in the working class upon which the stooge regime in Kiev and its imperialist backers rely.

Appearing in Moscow and the Crimean port city of Sevastopol yesterday for Victory Day parades, Putin sought to associate the liberation of Ukraine from the Nazis with the supposed glories of the Russian Tsarist empire, declaring that 230 years ago Russian Empress Catherine the Great gave Sevastopol its name.

In response to Putin’s appearance in Sevastopol, Washington and Berlin stepped up their threats against Russia. German Chancellor Angela Merkel condemned Putin’s visit and the White House said it would exacerbate tensions.



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