

# Obama heads to Europe for week of meetings directed against Russia

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President Barack Obama left Washington Monday night for a four-day trip to Europe, where he will seek to intensify the campaign against Russia that began with the US-backed and fascist-led coup in Ukraine in February. The trip will include Obama's first face-to-face meeting with Petro O. Poroshenko, the billionaire oligarch who is to be inaugurated as the new president of Ukraine on June 7.

Obama meets Tuesday in Warsaw with Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski and Prime Minister Donald Tusk, then with a group of Eastern European officials, including representatives from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. The following day he has a one-on-one session with Poroshenko.

The US president will also meet with American airmen deployed at a Polish air base and he will give a public speech marking the 25th anniversary of the first elections held after the collapse of the Stalinist regime in Poland.

Press reports suggest that Obama and Poroshenko will discuss direct US military aid to help the Kiev regime in its campaign to suppress opposition groups in eastern Ukraine, populated mainly by Russian speakers hostile to the ultra-right Ukrainian nationalists who now control the country's government.

Washington has so far limited its aid to "nonlethal" supplies, including military rations, but may well use the May 25 presidential election—largely boycotted in the eastern third of the country—as the pretext for escalating its intervention in the Ukraine crisis by supplying weapons and ammunition as well as providing military training.

Derek Chollet, the US assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, was in Kiev meeting with senior Ukrainian officials Monday. His task is to

draw up a detailed shopping list for the Ukrainian military that could be presented for Obama's signoff at the Wednesday meeting with Poroshenko.

Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, told the press, "We very much admired that the people of Ukraine have turned out in huge numbers to elect President-elect Poroshenko. We've admired his commitment to pursue dialogue and to aim to reduce tensions and put Ukraine on a positive path."

The "dialogue" pursued by Poroshenko involves the use of armored cars, artillery shells and aerial bombardment to "reduce tensions" with the people of eastern Ukraine by killing as many as possible. In the city of Slavyansk, for example, a center of opposition to the right-wing Kiev regime, Ukrainian government forces have hit residential districts with indiscriminate mortar and shellfire—actions that constitute war crimes under international law.

New fighting flared in the district of Luhansk, the easternmost part of the country, as 500 insurgents attacked pro-Kiev forces along the border with Russia. A spokesman for acting President Oleksandr Turchynov claimed that Ukrainian border guards were attacked by separatists seeking to open the border to obtain supplies and reinforcements.

A spokesman for the pro-Russian militants said they were not fighting border troops, but rather the Ukrainian National Guard, comprised largely of neo-Nazi thugs from the Right Sector and Svoboda (Freedom) Party. Reports from both sides described heavy fighting and considerable loss of life.

Obama's European trip will continue with a meeting of the Group of Seven, the heads of state from the US, Canada, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Japan, to be held in Brussels Wednesday night and Thursday. The G-7 has been reconstituted to exclude Russia,

which was to host a G-8 summit meeting in Sochi on the Black Sea this month.

The US will use the G-7 meeting to pressure its European allies, who have been reluctant to impose sweeping economic sanctions on Russia because of the consequences for their own economies. Germany relies on Russia for one-third of its energy supplies, for example, while Britain depends on the influx of capital from Russian billionaires to prop up the London financial markets.

A major American goal at the G-7 meeting is to revive an atmosphere of confrontation after Moscow responded to the May 25 presidential vote in Ukraine with significant concessions—recognizing Poroshenko as the president-elect, pulling all Russian troops back from the Ukrainian border, and offering better terms to Ukraine in negotiations on Russian gas exports. A “senior Obama administration official” told the *New York Times*: “What we don’t want is for everybody to exhale, ‘the election went well, now we’re all done.’”

National Security Adviser Susan Rice, speaking Sunday on the ABC television interview program “This Week,” boasted of the US role in stoking up tensions over Ukraine. “The United States, working with our European partners, has rallied to isolate and pressure Russia for its activities in Ukraine,” she said. “That’s the kind of leadership that only the world’s greatest power can bring to bear.”

The Putin regime will seek to forestall this gang-up with further diplomatic maneuvers at the United Nations Security Council. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia was submitting a resolution Monday calling for an end to the violence and the creation of humanitarian corridors in eastern Ukraine to allow civilians to leave combat areas.

He complained that the Western powers had assured Moscow that the May 25 presidential election would set the stage for a peaceful development, but that “everything is happening in exactly the opposite way.” He continued: “People are dying every day. Peaceful civilians are suffering more and more—the army, military aviation and heavy weapons continue to be used against them.”

Obama, Putin, British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Francois Hollande will attend a commemoration Friday of the 70th anniversary of the World War II landings in Normandy. Both Cameron

and Hollande have scheduled discussions with Putin during his visit, but the White House said there were no plans for a US-Russia summit meeting.

The D-Day commemoration is an awkward occasion for the imperialist powers, since they were allied with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany in 1944, while 70 years later they are allied with neo-Nazi elements in Ukraine as part of a campaign to encircle and destabilize Russia.

In June 1944, as US, British and Canadian troops were storming the beaches in Normandy, Soviet troops were mopping up the last Nazi strong points in Ukraine, taking Odessa in April; capturing Sevastopol, the main port of Crimea, in May, after a protracted siege; and opening a new offensive into Byelorussia in June. At the same time, pro-Hitler Ukrainian nationalist forces—the political ancestors of the Right Sector and Svoboda—were engaged in exterminating the last remnants of the ethnic Polish population of eastern Galicia and Volhynia (present-day western Ukraine) under the protection of the retreating Wehrmacht.



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