

# Ukrainian government forces deploy heavy weaponry as they encircle Donetsk

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6 August 2014

Ukrainian government forces have encircled Donetsk and are preparing a major offensive against the city, reportedly deploying heavy weaponry, including short-range missile launchers.

The extreme right-wing Kiev administration, installed in a Western-backed coup in February, has demanded that all residents in areas of eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian separatists must evacuate.

It comes after the regime, headed by billionaire oligarch President Petro Poroshenko expanded the military call-up first announced in May and imposed a 1.5 percent across the board hike in income tax to finance so-called “anti-terrorist” operations in east Ukraine.

Pro-government tanks are reportedly stationed in the suburb of Marinka, on the main road into Donetsk. A spokesperson for the Ukrainian military said that evacuation corridors were being set up for residents of Donetsk, Luhansk and Horlivka. Cars fleeing the conflict should display white flags, he said. The Donetsk city government posted the routes on its web page, explaining, “As practice shows, such messages are distributed before the start of active combat operations.”

Earlier, the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) released a battlefield map showing that the east Ukrainian city—home to one million people—has been cut off.

The NSDC is headed by Andriy Parubiy, founder of the neo-Nazi Social National Party of Ukraine. He led the fascist thugs in the Maidan protests that led to the February overthrow of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, after he failed to ratify austerity measures with the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund.

Such rightist scum, which make up the backbone of

the “volunteer” pro-government militias financed by various oligarchs, are being unleashed against east Ukrainian opponents of the power grab in Kiev.

A situation of de facto martial law now exists in eastern Ukraine, with anyone deemed to be supporting “separatism” liable to arrest and imprisonment.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Kiev has moved Tochka-U (Scarab or SS-21) ballistic missile systems and Smerch (BM-30 Tornado) and Uragan (BM-27) multiple rocket launchers toward the densely populated regional capital.

Ukraine has denied it will attack civilians, but it had previously dismissed reports that it is using Grad missiles against populated areas as Russian propaganda. However, Human Rights Watch confirmed that government forces had used the unguided missile system repeatedly in attacks on Donetsk between July 12 and 21, killing at least 16 civilians.

“The use of indiscriminate rockets in populated areas violates international humanitarian law, or the laws of war, and may amount to war crimes,” HRW’s July 25 report said.

A news update published on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) web site confirmed the military buildup. The report was posted by the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) investigating the crash of Flight MH17 in east Ukraine on July 17, killing all 298 passengers and crew.

The Western powers, led by the US and the European Union, have seized on the tragic crash to step up their provocations against Russia, including the imposition of punitive sanctions.

The SMM update for August 4 reported artillery shelling in several vicinities close to the crash site, where a ceasefire is supposed to be in operation. It also confirms reports from Moscow that the Russian border

checkpoint at the Gukovo crossing was attacked several times from the Ukrainian side at the weekend, when OSCE monitors were present.

“The SMM received information suggesting that shelling in Luhansk city was increasingly impacting on the civilian population,” the report continues, describing convoys of civilians leaving the area.

Luhansk, a city of 400,000, is entirely surrounded. Repeated shelling has brought down electricity, water and phone supplies. An Associated Press report quoted residents saying that the city “is dying.”

“Store shelves are emptying fast, and those who haven’t managed to flee must drink untreated tap water. With little medicine left, doctors are sending patients home.”

“As Ukrainian government forces slowly tighten their ring around the city,” it continues, “traveling in and out has become a perilous undertaking.”

Luhansk Mayor Sergei Kravchenko said the city is “on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe. ... Citizens are dying on the streets, in their courtyard and in their homes. Every new day brings only death and destruction.”

BBC defence correspondent Jonathan Beale called the situation in Donetsk “grave.” He describes “glass and debris” strewn across roads and “remnants of a Grad rocket attack with metal fragments embedded in the tarmac...”

With government forces reaching the city’s outskirts, “there are growing fears about the battle ahead. The streets of Donetsk are almost deserted, many shops are boarded up.”

“If Ukrainian government forces enter the city there could be street-to-street fighting,” he continues.

“It is hard to see anyone winning this war without paying a heavy price. And it is the people of Donetsk who could end up paying the heaviest price of all.”

More than 1,200 people have been killed and at least 3,500 wounded in eastern Ukraine since mid-April. Latest figures from the United Nations show that 117,000 have been forced out of their homes to other parts of Ukraine. The numbers fleeing are rising by 1,000 every day, and the latest figures indicate that up to 700,000 Ukrainians have left their country to go to Russia this year.

The UN says there has been a particularly sharp rise in the numbers displaced from the Luhansk and

Donetsk regions, from 2,600 in early June to 102,600 now. Many are living in temporary camps, “often in very primitive conditions,” Oldrich Andrysek from the UN refugee agency said.

In Kiev, the BBC’s Tom Burridge describes how some families fleeing from eastern Ukraine have taken up refuge in a warehouse on the edge of the capital. The disused factory is now home to 159 people, many of whom fled the bombardment in Donetsk.

The brutal assault of the Ukrainian regime has the full support and aid of the US and the EU.

The EU has lifted a ban on the supply of weaponry to Kiev and has sent “security advisers” to help the Poroshenko regime restore “law and order” in the country.

Meanwhile, the US announced it is dispatching a further \$8 million of equipment—including armoured vehicles—to bolster the Ukrainian offensive. It has also allocated \$ 19 million to help train Ukraine’s National Guard.

Russia has denounced Washington as complicit in Kiev’s “genocide.”

“In a situation, when the National Guard of Ukraine is leading punitive operations in the Donbass, the US promises to allocate for training and equipping this military structure—which also includes militants of the ultra-nationalist organization Right Sector—can be considered a direct financial and organizational complicity of the US in the genocide of civilians in south-east of Ukraine, as well as war crimes,” Irina Yarovaya, head of the Russian Duma’s security committee said in a statement.



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