

US-backed Kiev regime faces military debacle in east Ukraine war

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Reports of the fighting in the strategic east Ukrainian city of Debaltseve make clear that the US-backed Kiev regime sustained a humiliating defeat this week.

Late Wednesday, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko claimed that six soldiers had been killed and 100 wounded in a hurried evacuation of Debaltseve. He justified the evacuation by claiming that 2,475 soldiers and 200 military vehicles had been pulled out in time from the encirclement maneuver launched by Russian-backed forces of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR).

Yesterday, Poroshenko revised the casualty count upwards to 13 killed, 157 wounded, 90 captured, and “at least” 82 missing. However, according to the *New York Times*, “the number of dead would likely grow considerably higher.”

With estimates of the number of Ukrainian soldiers trapped in the Debaltseve area ranging from 5,000 to 8,000, it appears the Kiev regime's losses are to be counted in the thousands. Yesterday, DPR leader Alexander Zakharchenko declared, “We have completed an operation to clear Debaltseve. Unfortunately, Ukrainian authorities have failed to listen to reason and lay down arms ... The losses of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the [Debaltseve] pocket are estimated at around 3,000 to 3,500.”

Zakharchenko said that DPR authorities were negotiating with the Kiev regime for the return of the bodies of the fallen and the release of Ukrainian prisoners of war.

“The amount of equipment Ukrainian units have lost here is beyond description. We have taken loads of ammunition both in Debaltseve and Uglegorsk,” said Zakharchenko. He added that the Kiev regime had “lost its best units and a large amount of hardware and ammunition in the Debaltseve trap.” He said many

fighters from the Ukrainian 128th mountain rifle brigade, the 8th special force regiment, and the far-right Ukrainian National Guard had been killed.

DPR officials claimed yesterday that they were ending major combat operations. DPR Defense Ministry spokesman Eduard Basurin said, “On the whole, the situation along the contact line is gradually stabilizing. Units of the DPR's armed forces strictly abide by a ceasefire and don't fall for sporadic provocations by Ukrainian troops.”

Basurin reported, however, that fighting was still ongoing to crush isolated groups of Kiev regime fighters on the outskirts of Debaltseve.

Interviews of Ukrainian troops by Western journalists sympathetic to the Kiev regime painted a picture of total collapse. Ukrainian supply lines to Debaltseve were cut off for a week by DPR forces prior to the final assault, the *Guardian* reported, calling the Kiev regime's situation in east Ukraine “catastrophic.”

“We knew that if we stayed there, it would definitely either be captivity or death,” Ukrainian Lieutenant Yuriy Prekharia told the *Guardian*.

Ukrainian troops refused a DPR offer to let them to retreat unharmed if they abandoned their arms, and they repeatedly came under artillery and small arms fire as they fled. Medic Albert Sardarian said that after his column of armored vehicles carrying 1,000 men came under artillery fire, survivors had to flee on foot, leaving their dead and wounded behind.

As Ukrainian soldiers fleeing from Debaltseve arrived in Artemivsk, *New York Times* journalists reported, “Many soldiers were in a demoralized and drunken state. Shellshocked soldiers from the battle in Debaltseve wandered the streets through the day Wednesday, before beginning to drink heavily...At Biblios, an upscale restaurant in Artemivsk, soldiers

staggered about in the dining room, ordering brandy for which they had no money to pay, and then firing shots into the ceiling as other guests quietly fled the premises.”

The debacle suffered by the Kiev regime exposes the utterly reckless and frankly stupid character of the policy pursued by Washington and its EU allies in Ukraine.

One year ago, Washington, Berlin and the other NATO powers backed a putsch led by pro-Nazi forces of the Right Sector, exploiting the right-wing, pro-EU Maidan protests to topple President Viktor Yanukovich. The putsch had no popular support, and the Maidan protests rarely gathered more than a few thousand people bused in from western Ukraine. The regime that emerged, led by right-wing forces, including the fascist, anti-Russian Svoboda Party, deeply alienated the population in the more pro-Russian industrial heartland of east Ukraine.

The initial attempts of the Kiev regime and its CIA backers to subjugate east Ukraine by sheer military terror, relying on fascist militias and select units of the Ukraine army that it considered to be reliable, have failed. Popular opposition and covert Kremlin support for east Ukrainian forces has sufficed to defeat those units that Kiev could throw against the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Nevertheless, Washington is pressing Kiev to prepare for a renewed offensive and is still discussing directly arming the Ukrainian army against Russia with US weapons. While Washington pursues a strategy that could trigger a direct conflict between NATO and Russia, a nuclear-armed power, its proxy regime in Kiev is disintegrating.

In west Ukraine, the population is evading or resisting draft orders to obtain more cannon fodder for the east Ukraine war. At the same time, Ukraine’s economy, cut off from its main industrial base in east Ukraine and its export markets in Russia, is collapsing.

“The country is at war that they cannot afford to fight. There is no economy any longer. When you look at where the industrial base of Ukraine is, and the conflict going on in the east, there is absolutely no doubt as to why it is happening,” Gerald Celente of *Trends Journal* told *Russia Today*. “That \$160 billion loss of trade with Russia has destroyed the economy, when it was already in a severe recession. It went from

very bad to worse than depression levels.”

Ukraine’s Gross Domestic Product has shrunk 6.5 percent. Workers’ purchasing power is collapsing, with inflation expected to reach 27 percent this year and the hryvnia, the Ukrainian currency, losing roughly half its value against the dollar. In the meantime, Kiev is slashing wages, industrial subsidies, and social spending, throwing large sections of the working class out of work.

The Kiev regime’s reverses do not, however, signify an end to the conflict in Ukraine, which is driven above all by NATO’s drive to tear Ukraine out of Russia’s geostrategic orbit, to humiliate Russia and prepare to reduce it to the status of a semi-colonial dependency of the NATO powers. The only force that can stop this offensive is the international working class, mobilizing itself in struggle against NATO’s war plans.

Without such an intervention, NATO’s Ukrainian proxies will simply regroup and launch a renewed assault—as they did in the aftermath of the previous ceasefire negotiated in Minsk last September.

Poroshenko reacted to the defeat in Debaltseve by calling for what would be a new, major escalation of the conflict: deploying European Union (EU) troops as peacekeepers to east Ukraine to confront Russian-backed forces. He claimed this deployment would aim to enforce the terms of the second Minsk cease-fire agreement announced last week, which both sides in Ukraine have ignored.

“The best format for us is a policing mission from the European Union. We are convinced that this will be the most effective and optimal solution in a situation when promises of peace have not been kept,” Poroshenko declared. He said Kiev would “launch official consultations with our foreign partners” to this effect.

Oleksandr Turchynov, the head of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, called for EU troops to also deploy to Ukraine’s border with Russia—an utterly reckless move that would position EU troops for a direct attack on the centers of European Russia.



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