

# Russia declares state of emergency in Crimea after blasts leave 1.6 million without power

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Saboteurs attacked power infrastructure critical for supplying electricity to Crimea on Friday and Saturday, cutting off the peninsula's main source of power and forcing authorities to implement rolling blackout and water stoppages.

In what appears to have been a carefully planned attack, the saboteurs completely halted the flow of electricity from Ukraine into the Black Sea peninsula by destroying a handful of key pylons and transmission lines.

At least 1.6 out of 2 million Crimea residents were reportedly without power as of Sunday afternoon. One-fourth of the population has partially restored power by using mobile gas-powered generators deployed around the country, the Russian Energy Ministry claimed.

The pylons were unmistakably "blown up," probably using anti-tank mines, according to Ukrainian police. Subsequent efforts to repair the infrastructure have been hampered by members of a group calling itself the Civil Blockade of Crimea.

While the Civil Blockade group has denied responsibility for the attacks themselves, there has been speculation that the attacks were carried out by Tatar nationalist forces that have previously been courted by the US government as possible allies against Russia.

Suggesting some prime suspects for the attack, repairs were further delayed as melees broke out on Saturday around the site of the explosions, between a mixture of paramilitary units, Tatar activists and members of the neo-fascist group Right Sector.

Crimea relies heavily on imported power, producing only enough electricity locally to service some 20 percent of its population. As of Sunday, the peninsula remained "completely cut off" from the Ukrainian grid, a Crimea Energy director said.

Russian and Crimean authorities have implemented a

state of emergency, ordering the closure of schools and work stoppages on Monday. Some towns including Yevpatoria have shut off hot water service completely during daylight hours. Crimean authorities are preparing to implement water and electricity rationing schedules, according to the Associated Press.

Crimean officials are demanding a criminal investigation by the Russian security agency Federal Security Service (FSS). According to the *Financial Times*, an unspecified "advisory group" has recommended that Crimean authorities treat the incident as a "terror act."

Coming amid unprecedented geopolitical tensions and of growing demands for escalation against Russia from US and European ruling circles, the sabotage has the hallmarks of a deliberate provocation aiming to collectively punish the Crimean population, which voted overwhelmingly to secede from the US-installed, far-right Kiev regime and rejoin Russia last spring.

Crimea has been a focal point of the NATO powers' strategy offensive against Russia ever since, as the Western powers seized on the supposed "Russian takeover" to implement preexisting plans to militarize Eastern Europe and the Baltics and prepare new operations against Moscow.

The year and a half has seen NATO carry out feverish war preparations in Central and Eastern Europe, under the banner of countering Russia's alleged violation of Ukrainian sovereignty over the peninsula.

There were several signs in recent weeks that a further escalation in Ukraine was being prepared. During discussions on the sidelines of the G20 in Turkey last week, the US and other NATO powers agreed to extend, for an additional six months, the economic sanctions imposed on Moscow in response to alleged "Russian aggression" in Crimea and eastern

Ukraine.

On the ground, fighting between US and Russian-backed forces has flared in recent weeks, as Washington intensified its efforts to build up Ukrainian military and paramilitary formations as anti-Russian proxy forces, including nationalist and far-right paramilitaries such as the Right Sector and Tatar militias, which reports implicated in the Crimean bombings.

US military personnel began training new Ukrainian special forces units this weekend, according to Reuters.

For their part, Russian forces are participating in Chinese exercises in the South China Sea and are staging additional naval drills in the eastern Mediterranean.

The imperialist-backed Kiev regime is preparing to implement a European Union (EU) “free trade” agreement that will place the Ukrainian economy and the living standards of the Ukrainian masses fully at the mercy of US and European capital.

“EU just informed us that all is ready to launch a free trade zone with Ukraine as of January 1, 2016,” Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko wrote in a tweet last week.

Russia staunchly opposes the EU trade pact and has threatened to counter with economic warfare policies of its own, including the imposition of a “full food embargo” against Kiev.

The infrastructure bombings in Crimea are the latest in a series of politically incendiary incidents and provocations, all of which have served to advance the US government’s agenda of dictatorship at home and global war against rivals to the US-dominated world order abroad.

While US media has fixated on the role of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the Paris terror attacks, discussions within the US ruling elite underscore, however, that the “war against ISIS” is essentially a smokescreen for Washington’s global military agenda.

In remarks Friday to the University of Texas National Security Forum, prominent US political and military officials spoke openly about their plans to conquer and subjugate Russia through a combination of military economic and diplomatic means. Former US Army General and Harvard professor Kevin Ryan warned that Moscow is driven by “hostile intent,” and attacked Russia as a far more significant challenge to US

interests than ISIS.

After denouncing Moscow for allegedly instigating the worst international crisis since World War II and threatening to destroy the “liberal international order,” former Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky called for “more proactive sanctions” aimed at crippling Russia’s energy sector, along with a “larger US presence” in Ukraine.

These methods should be supplemented by diplomatic “engagement” aimed at cultivating US-aligned elements within the Russian elite, Dobriansky said.

Even as it squeezes Moscow economically and militarily, the US should “engage and reach out to Russians who want to see change,” she said. The impact of these measures on Russian society “will be bad at first,” but will create the conditions for a “new opportunity for liberalization,” she said.



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