

Ukrainian officials endorse Turkish downing of Russian jet

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The secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, Oleksandr Turchynov, staunchly defended the Turkish downing of a Russian warplane along the Syrian-Turkish border yesterday.

"The Turkish Air Force and Air Defence acted professionally and in a fashion relevant units of any civilized country should operate when its sovereign space is violated by another state's warplanes," he said.

Turchynov called for the Ukrainian military to adopt a similar hair-trigger posture toward alleged Russian border incursions, and to immediately shoot down any Russian planes in its airspace. "[The] Ukrainian military should act similarly, protecting our country against aggression from the air," he said.

Turchynov is a leading Ukrainian politician, having previously served as acting president following the US-orchestrated toppling of the Russian-backed government of President Viktor Yanukovych in February 2014.

Turchynov's comments come amid a marked escalation of anti-Russian chauvinism and war rhetoric from the authoritarian Ukrainian government installed in Kiev by Washington and Berlin in a coup led by neo-fascist forces.

During the three days that have passed since multiple coordinated bombings cut off of electricity to the entire Crimean peninsula, Ukraine's pro-Western elites have lashed out viciously against the Crimean population and alleged Russian war preparations.

Ukrainian officials have not even bothered to uphold the pretense that the acts of sabotage against the peninsula's infrastructure, which have left nearly the entire population without reliable electricity, were carried out independently of its orders.

A Ukrainian official "close to the circle of Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk," cited Tuesday by the

Globe and Mail, bluntly acknowledged that the sabotage and moves to block repairs along the Crimea border were approved by the government as a "demonstration" against Moscow.

In barely veiled language, he announced that Kiev is preparing new military operations and provocations against Crimea and eastern Ukraine: "What is happening on the Crimean border is not so much pressure on Russia as a demonstration that we are prepared to respond strongly to events in the east and in Crimea. It's a demonstration that Russian pressure on Ukraine could swing back on Russia like a boomerang. It's a demonstration that we also have trump cards."

Other allies of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko have responded with demands that Ukrainian electricity exports to Crimea be permanently suspended and that other embargoes be imposed, including on food.

The howling for new economic attacks against the Russian-aligned peninsula, which voted overwhelmingly to secede from Ukraine in the wake of the US-backed coup, has been accompanied by calls to place Ukraine on a war footing against Moscow.

In a statement published Tuesday, Kiev's National Security Council accused Russia of "urgently" building up offensive military assets against Ukraine, and deploying new assault troops along the border of "occupied Crimea."

In response, Russian officials have asserted that the attack on Crimea's power grid was a politically motivated act stemming from the Kiev government.

"It's strange that the [Ukrainian government] cannot access the electricity facilities. That is, out of some kind of political motivation the restoration of this line is not taking place," Russian energy director Alexander Novak said.

Moscow announced a number of its own retaliatory

economic warfare measures Tuesday, including cessation of gas shipments to Ukraine, as well as possible cessation of coal sales to Ukrainian companies.

Previous struggles over the flow of gas between Kiev and Moscow have shown the potential for such moves to devastate the economies of Eastern and Central Europe. Many regional economies maintain only weeks-long reserves of gas and would face devastating shortages in the event of a sustained Russian embargo.

The prospect of another Russian gas shut off and the associated economic fallout that will flow from further escalation of the Ukrainian crisis is fueling divisions within the European bourgeoisie.

Despite the central role played by Berlin in the February 2014 coup, sections of the European elite are clearly afraid of pouring further fuel on the situation in Ukraine, which appears on the verge of economic collapse and all-out war.

Germany's *Deutsche Wirtschafts Nachrichten* (DWN) warned readers Tuesday that the power pylons in Crimea were brought down by "extreme right-wing forces" that have been backed by the "EU-backed government," citing unnamed German officials. German officials have demanded that Kiev restore power to the peninsula and de-escalate its response, in order to spare "the people of Crimea," according to DWN.

The divisions within Europe over Russia policy are intensifying as new conflicts erupt between Kiev and Moscow, including clashes between proxy militias on the ground, the mutual banning of inter-Russian-Ukrainian commercial air traffic by both countries, and Ukrainian threats to end all food shipments into Crimea. Over the weekend, saboteurs cut off all electricity flowing from Ukraine into the Crimean peninsula, leaving 1.6 million residents without power.

Far right and nationalist militias with ties to Kiev subsequently intervened to physically block repair crews from accessing the lines, including the openly pro-Nazi Right Sector group that served as the vanguard of the February 2014 US- and German-backed coup.

Reports have also indicated involvement in efforts to prevent repairs to the sabotaged electrical infrastructure by Tatar nationalist forces that have been courted by Washington as US proxy forces. Tatar forces have been

conducting sabotage operations aimed at stopping the flow of commercial goods between Ukraine and the peninsula since September.

They come against the backdrop of a general escalation of direct US and NATO military involvement in Ukraine. US forces launched new combat training programs for Ukrainian Army units Monday, *Politico Europe* reported on Tuesday. The programs represent the first direct cooperation between US forces and the Ukrainian regular army. Previous US aid was routed through the civilian administration's interior ministry. US military units are working directly with Ukrainian counterparts to build and train new combat units, including special forces commandos.

In addition to the US-led drills, European forces under NATO command also began a new series of joint war games with Kiev-aligned units this week. The purpose of the training is to prepare Kiev's forces to "defeat Russia," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko boasted, ignoring the vast disproportion of forces between Russia and Ukraine.



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