

Another Russian military base in Crimea rocked by major explosions

Clara Weiss**16 August 2022**

Exactly one week after six blasts devastated Russia's Saki airbase in northern Crimea, a series of major blasts rocked another military base in a neighboring region of the Black Sea peninsula which was annexed by Russia in March 2014, following the US-backed far-right coup in Kiev.

While the Kremlin has tried to downplay last week's explosions, Ukraine claimed that 60 people were killed and 100 wounded. Satellite images appeared to show that at least 7 Russian fighter jets of the type Su-24 and Su-34 were destroyed and two severely damaged. This would amount to the largest loss for Russia's aviation in a single day since World War II.

The latest blasts occurred at around 6:15 a.m. local time on Tuesday, and hit a military base and electrical substation near the villages Maiskoe and Dzhankoiskoe. A major ammunition depot exploded, local energy supplies were disrupted, and residential buildings were damaged. Parts of the local railway network, which reportedly transports military equipment to Russian troops fighting in Ukraine, were also damaged and the railway had to stop service for most of Tuesday.

According to local authorities, over 3,000 people were evacuated, more than 10 times the number of official evacuees after last week's explosions. A state of emergency was proclaimed across northern Crimea and a safety zone with a radius of 5 kilometers (3 miles) was established around the site of the blasts. Officials indicated that only two people were wounded.

As was the case in last week's incident, the Kremlin insists that the reason for the blasts were acts of "sabotage," refusing to acknowledge Ukrainian involvement. Seemingly contradicting the Kremlin's version of events, Vladimir Konstantinov, a leader of the ruling United Russia party and head of the State Council of Crimea, wrote on his Telegram channel: "one thing is already clear: an agency of the terrorist Kiev regime has received the signal to become activated, and, since it is unable to engage in large actions, they try to do small mischief." Konstantinov called for strikes on the "decision-making centers" as the "most

effective and timely measure."

While Ukraine has not officially taken responsibility for the blasts, leading Kiev officials all but admitted, gloatingly, that Ukraine was behind them. Minutes after news of the blasts broke, Andriy Yermak, the main advisor to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, provocatively tweeted, "The Ukrainian Armed Forces continue the filigree 'demilitarization' operation to fully rid our land of Russian invaders. Our soldiers are the best sponsors of a good mood. Crimea is Ukraine." In a clear hint that more attacks are to come, Ukraine's Zelensky wrote on his Telegram channel Tuesday evening that Ukrainians should stay away from Russian military bases in Crimea and East Ukraine.

The American press, which had covered the blasts last week in an unusually subdued manner, is now reporting in an almost triumphant tone on the explosions. The *New York Times* wrote that "A senior Ukrainian official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss Tuesday's operation, said an elite unit was responsible for the explosions." Describing the strikes by Ukraine as "brazen," the *Times* wrote that they came "in defiance" of warnings by Russia's former president and deputy head of the security council Dmitry Medvedev that "judgement day" would come in case Ukraine struck Crimea.

The apparent strikes by Ukraine on Crimea are only the most extreme in a number of dangerous escalations of the imperialist proxy war against Russia on Ukrainian territory. Fighting still continues around the Zaporozhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe, with both Ukraine and Russia accusing each other of shelling the site. Experts have been warning for weeks of the potential of a major nuclear disaster, but the Ukrainian government has reportedly refused to let officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency enter the site other than by crossing the front lines.

Tensions have also escalated between Russia and the UK, Ukraine's second largest weapons supplier after the US. Kremlin officials reported that, on Monday, Russian fighter jets intercepted and forced out a British RC-135 reconnaissance flight that had crossed the Russian border.

On Tuesday, Russia's Defense Ministry warned Britain against another planned spy plane flight that would partially cross Russian territory. In a statement, the ministry said, "We regard this action as a deliberate provocation," and added that the Russian air force had been "given the task to prevent the violation of the Russian border."

The war in Ukraine, the bloodiest conflict in Europe in generations, is estimated to have already left tens of thousands of soldiers dead on both sides, and has caused over 5,000 civilian deaths and turned 12 million Ukrainians into refugees. However, the imperialist powers, above all the US and Britain, have continued to pump billions of dollars in weapons and ammunition into the Ukrainian army, which includes large fascist battalions and paramilitary units. Their aim is to bleed Russia dry and turn the war into a basis for a profound economic and political destabilization and, eventually, the carve-up of Russia itself.

The extraordinarily reckless behavior of the Ukrainian army and government can only be understood against this background. Despite extremely heavy losses and the immense risks involved, the Ukrainian army and government have for weeks announced that they were preparing an offensive in the south, and were determined to "retake" Crimea, a goal that has been part of Kiev's official military doctrine since March 2021. A spokesperson for the Pentagon has refused to preclude the use of American weapons for a Ukrainian attack on the Russian-built Kerch Bridge, which connects Crimea with the Russian mainland.

The Kremlin's desperate efforts to downplay the explosions on Crimea—which, from the standpoint of the Russian military, are both humiliating setbacks and extraordinary provocations—point to significant nervousness and divisions within the Russian oligarchy and state apparatus.

With the imperialist-provoked invasion of Ukraine, the Putin regime has sought to force the imperialist powers, above all the US, to the negotiating table, hoping that gains of the Russian army in the war would strengthen Moscow's position in negotiations with imperialism. Many pro-Kremlin commentators also speculated that the war would quickly open up rifts between the imperialist powers, especially Germany and the US, that Russia could exploit.

The opposite has occurred. One escalation of the war and provocation by US imperialism has followed another. And while divisions between the imperialist powers continue to boil beneath the surface, they all have used the Russian invasion as a pretext to massively rearm and consolidate their positions in a new imperialist redivision of the world.

In an indication of the gloomy discussions now taking place in Russian ruling circles, Sergey Krylov, who served as Russia's deputy foreign minister in 1993-1996, described

the war in Ukraine in the Kremlin-aligned think tank magazine *Russia in Global Affairs* as a "historical tragedy" and "cruel battle." Krylov speculated what form a carve-up of Ukraine between Russia and other Eastern European countries could look like, stressing that the US would always be the principal negotiating partner with Russia.

At the same time, Krylov insisted that none of the possible scenarios for an Eastern Europe with redrawn national borders would be easily manageable or even all that favorable for the Kremlin. Moreover, Krylov admitted that there was no prospect for any quick end to the war, bluntly stating, "There is little ground for optimism."

The only potentially positive scenario, Krylov wrote, was one in which the US would refocus its attention on war with China, which is now Russia's most important economic and military partner. "Strange as it may seem but the Chinese factor could play into our hands. The Americans are literally obsessed with the need to counteract Beijing in all possible ways, both in the economy and in politics. And they might end up committing a stupidity such as, for instance, support the proclamation of Taiwan as independent." In this case, Krylov continued, there would be an immediate war with China. "But to have two such conflicts at the same time is beyond the abilities of the Americans. Ukraine will have to be put on the back burner."

It is difficult to think of a more damning exposure of the political bankruptcy and reactionary nature of the Russian regime which has emerged out of the Stalinist nationalist reaction against the October 1917 Revolution and the destruction of the Soviet Union. Faced with encirclement by imperialism and engaged in a proxy war with NATO, the descendants of Stalin's counterrevolutionary bureaucracy hope that a war between the US and China, which would amount to a full-scale world war, will "play into the hands" of the Russian oligarchs.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact