

Ukrainian-backed far-right saboteur units stage largest attack on Russian territory yet

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On Monday, two Ukrainian-backed Russian insurgency units staged the largest attack on Russian territory in the war to date. The assault came just one day after Russia proclaimed the complete seizure of Bakhmut after 224 days of intense fighting, during which tens of thousands are believed to have died. It also comes just after the US declared it would train pilots for F-16 fighter jets, and Zelensky attended the G7 summit in Hiroshima, urging the imperialist powers to step up their involvement in the war even further.

According to Russian press reports and officials, two saboteur units raided the Belgorodskaya oblast early Monday, combined with a series of drone attacks and cyber attacks on the regional telephone and internet networks. For at least the first half of the day, residents were reportedly bombarded with phone calls as well as text messages urging them to evacuate, falsely presented as alerts by Russian officials. A report in the Russian *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on the events indicated that for much of the day during the attack, the population was left in the dark by officials about what was happening.

Drone strikes hit multiple targets in the region, including a grain depot in the village of Gora-Podol. In the same village, the Ukrainian-backed forces were also able to temporarily seize the “House of Culture” (Dom Kultury). One regional administrative building was shelled. Shells also hit private homes in at least several other towns and villages, causing fires and damage to buildings. As of this writing, regional officials have confirmed that eight people were wounded.

In the evening, the governor of the Belgorodskaya oblast, Viacheslav Gladkov, announced that a state of “counterterrorist operation” had been introduced in the region. The police and military forces deployed can now check identity documents, suspend activities of

branches of industries and organizations that make use of explosive, radioactive, chemical or biological substances, evacuate citizens temporarily and intercept their telephone and other communications.

As of this writing, Russian reports indicated that fighting between the saboteur units and the Russian military and National Guard was still ongoing in at least two locations, in Kozinka and Glotovo.

The units were identified by both Russian and Ukrainian officials as the Russian Volunteer Corps (RVC), a neofascist organization, and the far-right nationalist Freedom of Russia Legion. It was the first time Ukrainian foreign intelligence acknowledged that these two organizations, both of which were formed in 2022 and are classified as “terrorist” in Russia, were operating under de facto control of Ukraine’s armed forces.

The attack marks the culmination to this point of a series of ever more aggressive military interventions by Ukraine-backed insurgency units and drone and terrorist attacks on Russian territory over the past 10 months. This included the assassination in August of Daria Dugina, a prominent far-right proponent of the Kremlin war, the assassination of the Russian military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky in April, and drone strikes on the Kremlin earlier this month.

The Belgorodskaya oblast, which directly borders the territories in East Ukraine now occupied and claimed by Russia, has been a central focus of drone strikes and shelling by the Ukrainian armed forces. The attacks, especially over recent weeks, are seen by military analysts as part of the preparations for Ukraine’s long anticipated “counteroffensive.”

Monday’s attack is part of a dangerous new phase, which is marked by an ever greater geographic expansion of the war and direct involvement of the

imperialist powers. With Ukraine having suffered staggering losses, estimated in the hundreds of thousands—out of a resident population of under 30 million—the NATO imperialist powers are determined to offset the clear military setbacks by stepping up their direct involvement in the conflict and encouraging ever more reckless and dangerous attacks by Ukraine on Russian territory.

The character of the forces involved in the attack brings to the fore the true aims of the war being waged by the imperialist powers against Russia. Both the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion are ultranationalist and racist formations. They proclaim as their goal the violent overthrow of the government of Vladimir Putin and the institution of an ethnically “pure” Russian nation-state, along with separate, “independent” nation-states for other nationalities now living in Russia.

The Russian Volunteer Corps openly places itself in the tradition of the Vlasov Army, which collaborated with the Nazis in the war against the Soviet Union during World War II. In a manifesto from November, the RVC explicitly calls for the establishment of an ethnically pure Russian state, insisting that it represent “russkie”—a term for ethnic Russians—and not “rossiiane,” a term describing citizens of the Russian Federation regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. The Russian Federation’s 140 million residents include over 10 million Muslims and many other ethnic, national and religious minorities.

While the Freedom of Russia Legion has used less explicitly fascist language and symbols, it too has a clear far-right orientation. In a recent social media post, it declared that ethnic Russians are “the most oppressed” nationality in the Russian Federation today. One of its members is Igor Volobuyev, a native of Ukraine and the former vice-chairman of Gazprombank, one of Russia’s largest banks.

Just as with the central role of Ukrainian fascist and neofascist formations in the Ukrainian army, the involvement of these Russian far-right organizations in the NATO war exposes the true aim of the imperialist powers: the breakup of the Russian Federation through the fostering of ethnic and national conflicts. The aim of the promotion and arming of these forces is the establishment of far-right puppet regimes directly subservient to the imperialist powers.

The Putin regime has nothing to offer in response to this imperialist strategy except the promotion of a different form of Great Russian chauvinism and desperate efforts, through a combination of militarism and appeals for negotiations with the imperialist powers, to defend the interests of the oligarchy that arose out of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The beginning of a new, dangerous phase in the war points to the urgent need for workers to intervene in the political situation, based on an independent, socialist program and perspective. The further spiraling of the conflict into a Third World War, fought with nuclear weapons, can only be prevented through the mobilization of the working class in an internationally unified struggle against capitalism.



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