

Ukraine's counteroffensive remains a debacle despite efforts to exploit coup attempt in Russia

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Following this weekend's failed coup attempt by the far-right mercenary leader Evgeny Prigozhin in Russia, the government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is attempting to present the coup attempt as a turning point in the war and divert attention from its obviously failing counteroffensive in southern Ukraine.

Zelensky gleefully responded in real time to the coup attempt on Saturday, claiming on Twitter that the events highlighted Russia's "full-scale weakness."

Later, Andriy Yermak, head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, speaking with CNN's Christiane Amanpour on Tuesday, stated that "these last days, it's finally destroying the myth... that everything in Russia is under control," and that "after these events, more people in the world will be more sure about Ukrainian victory."

Immediately following the attempted coup, Yermak had written on Twitter, "A Russian civil war was the only plausible outcome to Putin's unlawful invasion of Ukraine."

These statements show the degree of NATO's and Kiev's support for the coup attempt. In fact, an earlier interview with the *Washington Post* indicated that Zelensky's intelligence service had been in contact with Prigozhin for months.

They also give, yet again, the lie to the war propaganda claims that the Zelensky government defends and stands for "democracy" in the war against Russia.

Evgeny Prigozhin is a convicted criminal, fascistic warlord and billionaire who has never even tried to claim to have anything to do with democracy. His Wagner mercenaries are known to maintain ties to the far right, and routinely glorify extreme violence on their social media channels. Until recently, Prigozhin's main criticism of the Russian army leadership was that it did not carry out the war in Ukraine aggressively enough.

Yet the Zelensky government cheered on the coup attempt, calculating that it would help destabilize the Putin regime and divert attention from Kiev's failing counteroffensive in southern Ukraine two weeks ahead of the critical NATO summit in Vilnius. While the Zelensky government and its imperialist backers also expressed the hope that the chaos in Russia would facilitate the counteroffensive, so far nothing of the sort has occurred.

Amid the confusion of the unfolding coup, Ukraine launched new offensives north and south of Bakhmut, in Orikhovo-Vasylivka, Bohdanivka, Yahidne, Klishchiiivka and Kurdyumivka. Yet despite the chaotic situation in Russia and the almost day-long seizure by Prigozhin of the headquarters of Russia's Southern Military District, which oversees the Russian army's operations in Ukraine, the Ukrainian military advanced just 17 square kilometers (6.6 square miles) compared with a week earlier, according to Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar.

All told, Ukraine's much publicized counteroffensive has "liberated" just 130 square kilometers (50.1 square miles) of territory in three weeks at the price of the lives of tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers. Ukrainian soldiers are still miles away even from reaching Russian defenses.

This week, Russia released horrific drone footage showing Ukrainian troops being torn apart as they drove head-on into heavily mined Russian defenses.

These videos essentially confirm earlier reports from both Ukrainian and Western officials that, despite billions of dollars in training and weaponry, the Ukrainian counteroffensive was going nowhere, even as Ukraine is suffering "heavy casualties," with deaths of up to 1,000 a day.

Despite the obvious failure of the counteroffensive,

Deputy Defense Minister Maliar continued to make absurd claims, such as, “The enemy’s casualties over the past week are eight times more than ours.”

To make up for mass casualties at the front and in a desperate attempt to mitigate the ever-growing problem of a lack of manpower, the Zelensky government is now carrying out a new wave of mobilizations in at least three provinces.

According to Volodymyr Arap, the head of the Kharkiv region’s recruiting offices, the military will be drafting men from ages 18 to 60 throughout July, regardless of military experience or desire to fight in the war.

In response to a question on whether the military was sending people to the front who do not want to go or are unmotivated, Arap bluntly stated the person’s desire to serve in the war was inconsequential.

“You are a citizen of Ukraine and must do everything in your power to protect her sovereignty and independence!” Arap responded.

As the WSWS has confirmed in interviews with Ukrainian youth, there is widespread fatigue over a war that has claimed the lives of at least 200,000 Ukrainian soldiers, wounding many more. Workers and youth who reject fighting in this bloody war, which is waged against Russia in Ukraine on behalf of the imperialist powers, are simply grabbed off the street and sent to the front.

In stark contrast to the false image of a country united in war against a common foe that has been created by the Ukrainian and NATO governments and their media, polls indicate that views on the war within Ukrainian society are highly ambiguous.

According to a poll by the George Soros Foundation-funded VoxUkraine, 25 percent of respondents in Ukraine and 29 percent of Ukrainian refugees abroad agree with the statement that, “The West is using Ukraine for its own purposes in the war against Russia.”

The poll also found that 29 percent of respondents in Ukraine and 35 percent of Ukrainian refugees agreed that the so-called “Revolution of Dignity” of February 2014—the official term given to the overthrow of a pro-Russian government by far-right forces with the backing of the US and EU—was, in fact, a coup.

As Ukrainian political scientist Ivan Katchanovski noted on Twitter, these results were all the more significant because they did not include areas under Russian occupation, and the responses were given in an environment of widespread political censorship and terror being carried out within Ukraine.

These polls clearly indicate that among many ordinary

Ukrainians, there is, in fact, growing skepticism and discontent with the war. Yet these sentiments find no expression in an atmosphere of a near-permanent war hysteria that is being whipped up by NATO and oligarchical and right-wing nationalist upper-middle class layers of Ukrainians that are given the limelight in Western media and academia.

With just two weeks to go until the NATO summit in Vilnius, the only response by NATO and the Ukrainian oligarchy to the mass killings and lack of any serious advance at the front has been to prepare a further escalation of the already catastrophic conflict.

This week, Denmark began training Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets.

While no Western country has yet delivered F-16s to Ukraine, it is clear that a campaign is being conducted to promote the eventual introduction of the American fighter jets into the war despite earlier assurances from President Biden that this would never happen because it would mean “World War Three.”

In comments in Kiev on Tuesday, Andriy Yermak claimed that Ukraine needed at least 100 F-16s to “win the war”. “I believe that it is absolutely realistic to receive the F-16 fighter jets before the end of the year,” Yermak said.

His words show that Ukraine’s attempts to procure F-16s and even further escalate the bloodbath are well known and conducted with the full knowledge and support of Kiev’s NATO backers.

“There is no such thing as someone not doing something and we don’t know why: Everything is open and transparent, in complete trust,” Yermak stated.



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