

Assault on Donetsk Risks War with Russia

By [Niles Williamson](#)

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Ukrainian armed forces have encircled the east Ukrainian city of Donetsk in preparation for a bloody assault on the city's population. Kiev is slowly tightening the noose around the pro-Russian separatist stronghold, threatening the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in a city that claimed nearly one million inhabitants prior to the US- and German-backed onslaught.

The Obama administration's policy of escalating pressure on the Russian regime by backing the Kiev regime's indiscriminate murder of civilians and destruction of infrastructure in east Ukraine is driving the situation towards war between nuclear-armed powers.

Alexander Zakharchenko, a Ukrainian national who last week replaced Alexander Borodai as the head of the pro-Russian Donetsk People's Republic, warned that there would be a large number of casualties if the Ukrainian forces moved to retake the city.

Facing an imminent and bloody attack, Zakharchenko stated that the DPR was "ready for a cease-fire to prevent the growth of the humanitarian catastrophe." Sergei Kavtarzade, a member of the DPR security council and aide to Borodai, called for a more limited ceasefire to allow for the opening of humanitarian corridors.

Kiev rejected calls for a ceasefire, instead demanding a complete surrender from the pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and in the areas throughout eastern Ukraine which remain under rebel control.

In response to the ongoing US-backed military campaign, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for a ceasefire in east Ukraine and the rapid deployment of humanitarian aid supplies to stem the crisis. He told reporters, "We believe the issue is pressing and must not be delayed. The question is under the Russian president's control. I am certain that we will be able to agree on this aid as soon as possible."

Lavrov also stated that a ceasefire was required by an agreement, which has not been honored by the Ukrainian government, signed by Ukrainian and Russian diplomats in April that called for both Kiev and the pro-Russian separatists to refrain from violence.

According to UN estimates, 730,000 Ukrainians have fled to Russia since the Ukrainian regime began military operations and a further 117,000 people have been displaced internally.

The UN also estimates that more than 1,129 people have been killed and 3,500 wounded in

the east since the Ukrainian government began its operations in April. Many of the civilian casualties have come as a result of indiscriminate artillery shelling of residential areas by Kiev-backed forces.

At a meeting of the United Nations (UN) Security Council on Friday, US Ambassador Samantha Power warned against any humanitarian intervention by Russia in eastern Ukraine. She laid blame for the crisis in the country entirely at Russia's feet, stating that "the humanitarian situation needs addressing, but not by those who have caused it."

Raising the prospect of war with Russia, Power stated that "any further unilateral intervention by Russia into Ukrainian territory, including one under the guise of providing humanitarian aid, would be completely unacceptable and deeply alarming, and it would be viewed as an invasion of Ukraine."

Power's presentation is a pile of reactionary and hypocritical lies, designed to shift blame for the catastrophe from the United States and its European imperialist allies onto Russia.

The ongoing attacks by the Kiev regime against Ukrainian civilians in the Donbass region are the outcome of the Obama administration's support for the fascist putsch that ousted pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich in February. The pro-Russian separatist groups which emerged soon after the coup in the Russian-speaking east have been ruthlessly crushed by Kiev military forces and fascist militias such as Right Sector with the full backing of the United States.

While it cynically claims not to want Russian intervention, the Obama administration has done everything in its power to provoke and goad Russia into such an intervention. Its policy was to install a violently anti-Russian, far-right government in Kiev and consolidate it through a violent war against the east Ukrainian population, with fighting taking place less than 50 miles from the Russian border. It is intent on humiliating the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, creating the conditions for its collapse and the carve-up of Russia itself.

That very scenario is now beginning to play out in eastern Ukraine. US statements insisting that Russia should not intervene militarily to halt the bloodshed unleashed by its puppet regime are deeply hypocritical. Only three years ago, the US claimed that the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi might launch armed repression in Benghazi and seized upon it to launch a bloody war that devastated Libya, toppled the Gaddafi regime, and led to the brutal murder of Gaddafi himself.

Yet now, as the people of Donetsk are surrounded by US-backed Ukrainian armed forces and fascist militias which threaten an imminent attack, Power denounces Russia for entertaining the possibility of a military intervention.

Power was a leading advocate of the bombing of Libya by US-NATO forces and has strongly promoted the US proxy war for regime change in Syria, including Sunni Islamist militias similar to ISIS itself. She is pushing the ongoing US bombing campaign in Iraq against ISIS, an organization fostered by the US and its allies in Syria, on the "humanitarian" grounds that a US war is necessary to protect Iraqi civilians from ISIS.

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