

Remember the Maine: The Alleged Russian Atrocity at Bucha Looks Like Another in a Long Line of False Pretexts for War

Unproven massacre by Russian troops in Bucha was used to compel passage of Ukrainian Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022 and escalate U.S. military intervention

By [Jeremy Kuzmarov](#)

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From the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine to the infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident to the chemical weapons attacks in Syria that were falsely blamed on Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, the American public has routinely been fed disinformation in an effort to get them to support wars of aggression on the principle that they are being fought in self-defense.

The alleged massacre by Russian troops in Bucha, a town 63 kilometers north of Kyiv, following a Russian retreat on March 30, appears to be the latest such incident designed to garner support for a wider U.S. war against Russia.

On March 31, the mayor of Bucha, Anatoli Fedoruk, heralded the liberation of Bucha from Russian occupiers; notably, he [made no mention of any massacre](#).

The New York Times reported that the Russian withdrawal was completed on Saturday, April 2, and that the Russians [“left behind them dead soldiers and burned vehicles, according to witnesses, Ukrainian officials, satellite images and military analysts.”](#) No mention of any massacre.

The *Times* article from April 2, authored by Andrew E. Kramer and Neil McFarquhar, was titled: [“In Broad Retreat From Kyiv, Russia Seeks to Regroup.”](#) It pointed out that “Ukrainian soldiers from the Azov battalion walked through the remnants of a Russian military convoy in the recently liberated town of Bucha on Saturday, just outside the capital after the Russians withdrew.”

The Azov Battalion is a notorious neo-Nazi outfit so it could not have ushered in much of a

liberation.^[1]

The *Times* reported further that it had found the bodies of six civilians. [“It was unclear under what circumstances they had died, but the discarded packaging of a Russian military ration was lying beside one man who had been shot in the head,”](#) the paper said.

This would indicate that they were probably Russian soldiers that were killed or civilians friendly toward the Russian military who had received food from them.

Azov Battalion Sweep

On April 2, hours before the massacre was reported in international media, the U.S. and EU-funded Gorshenin Institute online [Ukrainian language] site *Left Bank* announced that:

“Special forces have begun a clearing operation in the city of Bucha in the Kyiv region, which has been liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The city is being cleared from saboteurs and accomplices of Russian forces.”

The Russian military had by this point completely left the city so, as Joe Lauria [reported in Consortium News](#), this sounded like reprisals. The state authorities would be going through the city searching for “saboteurs” and “accomplices of Russian forces.”

[Sergiy Korotkikh](#), head of the Nazi territorial defense at Bucha, shared a 30-second video on Telegram of Azov Battalion troops walking along a deserted street in Bucha and a fragment of conversation afterwards:

[“Those guys without blue armbands, can we shoot them? Fucking of course!”](#)

This clearly indicates that the Ukrainian army forces carried out civilian shootings in Bucha which have gone unacknowledged by politicians and in the mainstream U.S. media.

“Apparent Atrocities“

It was only after the Azov Battalion sweep—on Sunday, April 3—that the world learned of the Bucha massacre.

According to [Wikipedia](#), Mayor Fedoruk at this time reported that 412 bodies were found in the aftermath of the incident, many with their hands bound behind their backs and shot at close range.

An inquiry by [Radio Free Europe](#) claimed to confirm the use of a basement beneath a campground as a [torture chamber](#). Many bodies were found mutilated and burned, and girls as young as fourteen were reportedly raped by Russian soldiers.

Human Rights Watch reported, based on an eyewitness testimonial, that [soon after they occupied the city in early March, Russian forces went door to door, searching residential buildings, claiming they were “hunting Nazis.” 16 unlawful killings were attributed to Russian forces, including nine summary executions and seven indiscriminate killings of civilians.](#)

Human Rights Watch also documented that [Russian soldiers executed five men in Bucha in a separate incident prior to their withdrawal](#) and that a [man was shot on his balcony by](#)

[Russian troops while smoking a cigarette and that a 9-year old girl was shot in the shoulder while trying to run away from Russian forces.](#)

These findings contradict the Russian Defense Ministry’s claim that [“not a single local resident has suffered from any violent action”](#) while Bucha was [“under the control of the Russian armed forces,”](#) and that the evidence of crimes was a [“hoax, a staged production and provocation”](#) by authorities in Kyiv.

However, oddly, there is [not a single piece of video footage of Russian troops in Bucha engaged in wide-scale civilian killings; not a single snapshot, social media update, or text message.](#)

The chief regional prosecutor in Bucha, Ruslan Kravchenko, told Human Rights Watch on April 15 that [278 bodies had been found in the town since Russian forces withdrew](#)—but he did not specify who was the source of their death.

Serhii Kaplychnyi, head of the municipal funeral home in Bucha, said that [during the Russian occupation, his team placed dozens of bodies in communal graves, though at least some of the victims were Ukrainian soldiers.](#)



Ukrainian authorities in Bucha exhume bodies from a mass grave behind the Church of St. Andrew and All Saints, where local authorities and volunteers placed bodies of those who died and were killed during the occupation of the city by Russian forces. [Source: hrw.org]

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said:

[“We strongly condemn apparent atrocities by Kremlin forces in Bucha and across Ukraine. We are pursuing accountability using every tool available, documenting and sharing information to hold accountable those responsible.”](#)

The word “apparent” is significant because it acknowledges that the atrocities are not confirmed. The Pentagon in fact admitted on April 4 that it [could not independently confirm the stories of Russian atrocities at Bucha](#).

Leaked Satellite Images Offer No Smoking Gun

The BBC and other Western media outlets purported to have smoking-gun proof that Russia was behind a major massacre in Bucha when they reported on satellite images from March 19 showing dead bodies that were in the same place that they were found by Ukrainian forces after the Russian troops had withdrawn.

According to the BBC, this directly contradicted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s claim that footage of bodies in Bucha was “staged” after the Russians withdrew.

The number of bodies in the satellite imagery is only six, however, which is well short of the total of 412 civilians that the Ukrainian government claimed Russian troops had massacred in Bucha.

Former U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Officer Scott Ritter pointed out, furthermore, that dead bodies left to rot on the street for nearly two weeks [would be badly bloated and decomposed with black faces and putrid liquid coming out of them](#)—which was not shown in the satellite imagery.

According to Ritter, evidence that could be extracted from the images showed that the [bodies appeared to have been killed within 24-36 hours of their discovery](#)—meaning that they were killed after the Russians withdrew from Bucha.

Many of the bodies had [white cloth strips tied to their upper arm, a visual designation which indicated either loyalty to Russia or that the persons did not pose a threat to Russians](#).

Ritter said that the evidence overall is strong that the Ukrainian police carried out a cleansing operation in Bucha on April 1 and murdered people. However, the Ukrainian government—which is losing the war—[saw an opportunity to gain sympathy for its cause in the West by blaming the Russians and building momentum for more military support](#).

Ritter added that the U.S. knows very well who killed so many people in Bucha—they have the satellite photos—but that the U.S. “isn’t in the business of truth.” Rather, they are “in the business of promulgating Ukrainian lies”—which aim to “advance the narrative of Russia as a genocidal state massacring Ukrainian civilians”—which is not what happened.

Car footage from April 1 purports to show dead bodies in the same place as the March 19 satellite images. Chilean journalist Gonzalo Lira, who was detained by Ukrainian Security Services (SBU), asserted that the car video [was of high-production quality that could only be achieved with high-end equipment](#), suggesting it was made by government intelligence agencies.

Another section of the road showed more dead bodies from March 11. Russian sources claim the bodies were in fact moving and were not dead.

Whether the latter is true is uncertain. However, the number of bodies on the satellite images amounts to at most nine—well short of 412 and not consistent with genocide. The

condition of the bodies and existence of white cloth strips beneath their arms further suggests that they were killed by the Azov battalion—which has received arms from the U.S. and training from the CIA and/or U.S. Special Forces who are experts in psy-war (creating atrocities and blaming them on the enemy).

Russians Acted Like Savages

On April 6, *The Washington Post* published an article entitled [“In Bucha, the scope of Russian barbarity is coming into focus.”](#) The article claimed:

“The name of this city is already synonymous with the month-long carnage that Russian soldiers perpetrated here. But the scale of the killings and the depravity with which they were committed are only just becoming apparent as police, local officials and regular citizens start the grim task of clearing Bucha of the hundreds of corpses decomposing on streets and in parks, apartment buildings and other locations ... investigators uncovered evidence of torture before death, beheading and dismemberment, and the intentional burning of corpses ... ‘[The Russians] didn’t act like men; they acted like savages’ ... [The Russians] made the city an arena for blood sport ...”

This was characteristic of media coverage.

The media and political establishment from this time began to clamor for greater U.S. military intervention. Congressman Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) even called for shooting down Russian planes.

President Biden [called Putin a war criminal because of what happened at Bucha](#) and told the conference of North America’s Building Trades Unions: “If I gotta go to war, I’m going with you guys,” causing the audience to cheer with gusto.

Lend Lease Act of 2022

The war fever resulting from the alleged Bucha massacre led to the unanimous passage by the U.S. Senate on April 6 of the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022, which [loosened regulations on military shipments to Ukraine](#) using World War II language.

The law states that lent or leased defense articles “are intended for Ukraine’s government or the governments of other Eastern European countries affected by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.”

This expansion allows the president to expedite delivery of military supplies to other countries that may be in Russia’s sights.

The Lend-Lease Act followed from an [emergency \\$13.6 billion aid package to Ukraine](#) that was passed with only three dissenting votes in Congress.

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who supported both measures, called the Bucha massacre “pure evil,” adding that Russian troops are carrying out a “genocide” in Ukraine. [“When we murder wantonly innocent civilians because of who they are, whether it be their religion, their race, or their nationality, that is genocide, and Mr. Putin is guilty of it,”](#) Schumer said.

Chris Coons, the Democratic Senator from Delaware and President Biden’s closest ally in the U.S. Senate, went on CBS News’s *Face the Nation* after news of Bucha broke to state:

“The American people cannot turn away from this tragedy in Ukraine ... I think the history of the 21st century turns on how fiercely we defend freedom in Ukraine and that Putin will only stop when we stop him ... If Vladimir Putin, who has shown us how brutal he can be, is allowed to just continue to massacre civilians, to commit war crimes throughout Ukraine without NATO, without the West coming more forcefully ... I deeply worry that what’s going to happen next is that we will see Ukraine turn into Syria ...”

On April 28, the Lend-Lease bill was [approved in the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 417-10](#).

S. 3522: Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022



Source: govtrack.us

All of the Democrats, including the entire progressive caucus and “the Squad” and all but 10 Republicans, approved the bill after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited everyone to the Speaker’s Dining Room for a [photo exhibit](#) that “capture[d] many of [the Russian] atrocities...unthinkable, grotesque, diabolical atrocities.”

On May 9, after a [visit to a Lockheed Martin plant in Alabama that produces the Javelin anti-tank missiles that are supplied to the Ukrainian military](#), President Biden signed the Lend-Lease bill into law, stating that the [“atrocities the Russians are engaging in \[ie. Bucha\] are just beyond the pale.”](#)

Like other military aid programs to Ukraine, the Lend-Lease bill by implication would have no legitimacy if the atrocities attributed to Russia were either exaggerated or actually committed by Ukraine.

Long Pattern of False Pretexts

The Russian “massacre” at Bucha is but the latest in a long line of false slanders or half-truths directed against Russia that have been used to compel support for legislation that provokes conflict and advances regime-change efforts.

In 2012, the U.S. Congress passed the Magnitsky Act, sanctioning Russia based on false allegations that the Russian government had stolen \$230 million from an American hedge-

fund manager in Russia and Democratic Party donor named Bill Browder and tortured to death his lawyer, Sergey Magnitsky, who was a whistleblower in the case.

Magnitsky in fact was an accountant specializing on off-shoring money for the wealthy who was being investigated as an accomplice in Browder's scheme to rob the Russian government, and likely died of a heart attack.^[2]



The late John McCain (R-AZ), a Russia hawk and strong supporter of the Magnitsky Act and new Cold War, speaks near portrait of Sergey Magnitsky. [Source: mccaininstitute.org]

In 2016, the U.S. accused the Russians of meddling in the U.S. election when evidence about this was discredited and at best thin.^[3] Earlier, the Russians were accused of shooting down a Malaysian airliner when thorough investigations pointed to the likely culpability of the Ukrainian intelligence services, with possible CIA backing.^[4]

The Russians were additionally falsely accused of a) paying bounties for killing U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan; b) selling COVID vaccine R&D secrets from the West; c) hacking into Vermont's power grid, and; d) [ordering the poisoning of the Skirpals and Alexei Navalny](#).

All of these incidents fit a larger pattern in U.S. history of disinformation and deception that has fueled the permanent warfare state and has greatly increased the threat of nuclear Armageddon.

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Jeremy Kuzmarov is Managing Editor of CovertAction Magazine. He is the author of four books on U.S. foreign policy, including Obama's Unending Wars (Clarity Press, 2019) and The Russians Are Coming, Again, with John Marciano (Monthly Review Press, 2018). He can be reached at: jkuzmarov2@gmail.com.

Notes

1. The *Times* also noted that in the nearby town of Irpin, “members of the Odin Unit, which includes foreign fighters from the United States and United Kingdom, took cover on Tuesday as they moved through the streets and cleared remaining Russian forces.” The presence of U.S. and UK mercenaries does not give confidence that the people of the region would view the defeat of Russian troops as a genuine liberation.
2. See Jeremy Kuzmarov and John Marciano, *The Russians Are Coming, Again: The First Cold War As Tragedy, the Second As Farce* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018), 13, 14.
3. Kuzmarov, *The Russians Are Coming, Again*.
4. See John Helmer, with Max van der Werff, Liane Theuerkauf and Sam Bullard, *The Lie That Shot Down MH17* (John Helmer, 2020).

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