

Trump Continues Obama-Era Saber Rattling with Russia by Arming Ukraine

The Russia-obsessed corporate media continues to peddle the narrative that Donald Trump has turned the United States into a client-state of Russia, even while he directly provokes the former Soviet Union by providing Russia's foe — Ukraine — with the largest lethal assistance to a country on its border.

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Despite the mainstream media's [insistence](#) that U.S. President Donald Trump is some sort of compromised Russian lackey, the fact is that at the end of last year, his [administration approved](#) the largest U.S. commercial sale of lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine since 2014. This is a move that clearly [infuriates and angers](#) Russia, souring relations between the two countries even more so than they [already had been](#) under the Obama administration (and in [various stages](#) throughout Trump's first year in office).

[According](#) to *The Washington Post*, administration officials confirmed that in December the State Department had approved a commercial license authorizing the export of Model M107A1 Sniper Systems, ammunition, and other associated parts and accessories to Ukraine — a package valued at \$41.5 million.

At first, it was reported there had not yet been approval to export the heavier weaponry the Ukrainian government had been asking for, such as anti-tank missiles. However, by the end of December, [reports](#) began surfacing that the Trump administration was in fact going to provide 35 FGM-148 Javelin launchers and 210 anti-tank missiles. The Javelin is allegedly one of the most advanced anti-tank systems on the market. The total package is now valued at \$47 million, and it wouldn't be surprising if this figure continues to rise in the weeks to come.

Even under the [2014 Ukraine Freedom Support Act](#), the Obama administration never authorized large commercial or government arms sales, thereby making the recent announcement the first time that the U.S. will provide "lethal" weapons to the Ukraine military.

One senior congressional official said that he predicted this would be just the beginning, stating that the U.S. had "*crossed the Rubicon; this is lethal weapons and I predict more will be coming*," according to the *Post*. *Foreign Policy's* Michael Carpenter [suggested](#) that NATO countries should follow suit and also provide Ukraine with the arms it needs to counter the so-called threat of Russia. Considering that in September 2017 Russia proposed that UN peacekeepers be [deployed](#) to Ukraine, it should be clear that the U.S. is more bent on escalating this conflict than on resolving it.

Russia has already [responded](#) in kind, with Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov stating that the U.S. has become an accomplice in the war and that these developments make it impossible for Russia to remain “indifferent,” thereby forcing Russia to consider retaliation measures in response.

The U.S. is the [world’s largest arms dealer](#). The U.S. arms so many countries so much of the time that most of us barely blink. And yet, even taking at face value America’s stated goals of spreading democracy and promoting human rights, the facts on the ground appear to run contrary to those ideals and the U.S. is well aware of these contradictions.

In reality, the United States intervened covertly in Ukraine in 2014 because Russia and Europe were [growing far too close to each other for America’s comfort](#), with Russia supplying at least 30 percent of Europe’s gas supply. This was an issue particularly in relation to [Germany’s growing fondness for Russian gas](#), as Germany is set to [become the EU’s major player](#).

This is a deal-breaker for Washington, which would rather support [known neo-Nazis](#) and anti-Semites in order to install a right-wing government capable of opposing Russia as close to the Russian border as one can get.

U.S. installed a puppet government in Ukraine

On February 7, 2014, the BBC published a [transcript](#) of a bugged phone conversation between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt. In this phone call, the U.S. officials were openly discussing who should form Ukraine’s government even before the president, Viktor Yanukovych, had been successfully [ousted from power](#). In other words, the U.S. was actively doing to Russia’s neighbour what the corporate media and various elements of the intelligence communities have accused Russia of doing to the U.S. during the 2016 elections. As *The Nation* [explained](#):

“In the intercepted phone call between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, the two were, as Russian expert [Stephen Cohen](#) put it to Democracy Now, **‘plotting a coup d’état against the elected president of Ukraine.’**” [emphasis added]

“Good. I don’t think Klitsch [opposition leader Vitaly Klitschko] should go into the government. I don’t think it’s necessary, I don’t think it’s a good idea,” Nuland said in the call, as transcribed by the BBC.

Pyatt responded:

“Yeah. I guess... in terms of him not going into the government, just let him stay out and do his political homework and stuff. I’m just thinking in terms of sort of the process moving ahead we want to keep the moderate democrats together. The problem is going to be Tyahnybok [Oleh Tyahnybok, an opposition leader] and his guys and I’m sure that’s part of what [President Viktor] Yanukovych is calculating on all this.”

Nuland added:

“I think Yats [opposition leader Arseniy Yatseniuk] is the guy who’s got the economic experience, the governing experience. He’s the... what he needs is Klitsch and Tyahnybok on the outside. He needs to be talking to them four times a week, you know. I just think Klitsch going in... he’s going to be at that level working for Yatseniuk, it’s just not going to work.”

Oleh Tyahnybok, who had met with Senator John McCain [one year prior](#), is the leader of the right-wing nationalist party Svoboda. When Svoboda was founded in 1995, the party [had](#) a swastika-like logo. As *Business Insider* [explains](#), Tyahnybok is also a known anti-Semite:

“Tyahnybok himself was expelled from the Our Ukraine parliamentary faction in 2004 after giving a speech [demanding that Ukrainians fight against a ‘Muscovite-Jewish mafia’](#) (he later clarified [this by saying that he actually had Jewish friends](#) and was only against ‘a group of Jewish oligarchs who control Ukraine and against Jewish-Bolsheviks [in the past]’). In 2005 he wrote open letters demanding Ukraine do more to halt ‘criminal activities’ of ‘organized Jewry,’ and, even now, Svoboda openly calls for Ukrainian citizens to have their ethnicity printed onto their passports.”

When the protests broke out in Ukraine in 2014, the entire movement was hijacked by these racist elements.

“You’d never know from most of the reporting that far-right nationalists and fascists have been at the heart of the protests and attacks on government buildings,” reported Seumas Milne of [The Guardian](#).

Just days ago, [thousands marched](#) in Kiev to celebrate the anniversary of far-right nationalist Stepan Bandera’s birthday.

It is revealing that, when the U.S. decided to make a choice between a president they viewed as a Russian ally and the various ultra-right nationalist elements of Ukraine, Washington decided to help oust the former for the benefit of the latter.

The State Department promoting neo-nazism in Ukraine



A photo of the Azov Battalion – a regiment of the National Guard of Ukraine. (Photo: Twitter)

Eventually, it was reported that a man named Petro Poroshenko would be taking up the reins after Yanukovich's abdication. According to a cable [obtained](#) by WikiLeaks, Poroshenko previously worked as a mole for the U.S. State Department. The State Department even referred to Poroshenko as "our Ukrainian insider."

For those who truly believe the U.S. protects and promotes democracy while challenging tyranny and dictatorships across the globe, the truth about Washington's support for puppet regimes that fail to garner the support of their own people is even worse than any [anti-imperialist commentator](#) could ever have imagined. In March last year, *Foreign Affairs* reported that [Poroshenko](#) had an approval rating as low as 17 percent. In September last year, the *Japan Times* [reported](#) that his approval rating had dropped to a *single digit*. Some [reports](#) say it was as low as 2 percent. October last year saw his approval rating grow to its highest in recent times, [reaching](#) a stratospheric 14 percent.

In other words, the Trump administration is actively propping up a failed administration in Europe, which does not have the support of 15 percent of its people. Even the far-right militias in Ukraine [seem to have more support](#) than the current government. Meanwhile, the U.S. has done nothing but its utmost to tear apart the respective democratically elected governments in [Syria](#) and [Iran, both of which](#) have far [greater approval ratings](#) than do Poroshenko and his administration.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov [said](#) Washington's recent decision to arm Ukraine will only make the conflict more deadly and suggested that Russia could be forced to respond.

"[The U.S. is] not a mediator. It's an accomplice in fueling the war," Ryabkov said in a statement.

Clearly, Russia has a vested interest in not seeing another NATO ally on its borders, capable of pointing American missiles in its face on a daily basis.

As *The National Interest* [learned](#) at the end of last year from recently [declassified material](#), the U.S. did indeed break a promise at the end of the Cold War that NATO would expand "not one inch eastward." George Washington University National Security Archives researchers Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton [wrote in the National Security Archives](#):

"The [recently declassified] documents show that multiple national leaders were considering and rejecting Central and Eastern European membership in NATO as of early 1990 and through 1991. That discussions of NATO in the context of German unification negotiations in 1990 were not at all narrowly limited to the status of East German territory, and that subsequent Soviet and Russian complaints about being misled about NATO expansion, were founded in written contemporaneous memcons and telcons at the highest levels."

The documents appear to confirm Russia's assertion that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev accepted the proposal for German reunification (which Gorbachev could have vetoed) only in reliance upon these assurances from its American counterparts that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe. This history is reminiscent of how Russia was further duped out

of using its veto power on a U.N. Security Council Resolution in Libya in 2011, after having [received assurances](#) that the coalition would not pursue regime change.

“I believe that your thoughts about the role of NATO in the current situation are the result of misunderstanding,” then-British Prime Minister John Major [told](#) Gorbachev, according to British Ambassador Rodric Braithwaite’s diary entry of March 5, 1991:

“We are not talking about strengthening of NATO. We are talking about the coordination of efforts that is already happening in Europe between NATO and the West European Union, which, as it is envisioned, would allow all members of the European Community to contribute to enhance [our] security.”

The documents also show that Russia had received these assurances from a number of other high-level officials. These officials included then-Secretary of State James Baker; President George H.W. Bush; West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher; West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl; former CIA Director Robert Gates; French leader Francois Mitterrand; Margaret Thatcher; British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd; and NATO Secretary-General Manfred Woerner.



U.S. Army soldiers representing units participating in the the Anaconda-16 military exercise, attend the opening ceremony, in Warsaw, Poland, Monday, June 6, 2016. Poland and some NATO members launched their biggest ever exercise, involving some 31,000 troops in a show of force to neighboring Russia. (Source: MintPress News)

Since that time, NATO has clearly expanded into Europe to the detriment of Russia. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has grown to [include](#) the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, Albania and Croatia, and [Montenegro](#).

These developments are crucial because, when one is honest about America’s infamous history since World War II, it is clear that NATO [exists as an entity](#) only to counter and contain Russian influence. Its sole purpose is to oppose Russia at every corner and this is no secret even in the corporate media.

[According to the Telegraph](#), NATO was formed in “Washington on 4th April, 1949 after the end of the Second World War, largely to block Soviet expansion into Europe.” This can be seen clearly in the complete rejection of the Soviets’ [attempt to join NATO itself](#) after Joseph Stalin’s death.

In a 2016 [interview with *The New Yorker*](#), Douglas Lute, a former three-star general and then-U.S. Ambassador to NATO also patently admitted that:

“...NATO was founded on the premise of preventing an attack by the Soviet Union in Central Europe, where the U.S. would have to come to the aid of Europe ... For the first forty years, nato focussed on its greatest risk—the threat that the Soviet Union posed to Western European security.”

At the time the unrest broke out in 2014, then-NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen’s [comment](#) that the proposed IMF-EU package presented to Ukraine would have been “a major boost for Euro-Atlantic security” suggested that NATO had set its sights on bringing Ukraine into the military alliance. [In July of this year](#), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with Poroshenko in Kiev to further discuss this prospect, already pledging support to Ukraine on some level.

Now Ukraine’s bid to join NATO seems almost irrelevant, as the U.S. is formally involving itself deeper in the Ukrainian conflict and providing arms to a regime that has flirted with an approval rating lower than 10 percent, all the while provoking Russia to take further measures in response.

What could possibly go wrong?

Meanwhile, the Russia-obsessed corporate media [continues to peddle the narrative](#) that Donald Trump has turned the United States into a client-state of Russia, even while he directly provokes the former Soviet Union by providing lethal assistance to a country on its border. Not only is Trump maintaining an Obama-era policy, he is aggravating and converting Obama’s Ukraine policy into a much more dangerous one — ultimately aimed at provoking an aggressive response from Russia in the weeks or months to come.

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