

Ukraine Government Forces Encircled and Defeated: The Strategic Implications of The Battle for Debaltsevo

By [The Saker](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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The Novorussians are in control of most of Debaltsevo. There is no more organized resistance. Russian sources say that about 1000 junta soldiers have refused to surrender and are hiding in the outskirts or have fled to the south end of the cauldron. The Novorussians are not even bothering to hunt them down or return their sporadic (and inaccurate) fire: they are waiting for hunger and cold to force them to give up. A spokesman for the Novorussians has reported that all communications between the junta forces in the cauldron and their commanders have been suppressed. Russian TV stations are showing footage of Novorussian soldiers raising their flag over the center of the city.

That the forces in the Debaltsevo cauldron were doomed was pretty clear for a while already, but what is still amazing is the speed at which the collapse has taken place. Clearly, we are dealing with a catastrophic collapse of combat capability of the junta forces.



Novorussian flag over Debaltsevo

The Russian media is also showing many footages of surrendering junta soldiers in and around Debaltsevo. Those who surrender are treated for their wounds, washed, clothed, fed and they will be sent home as soon as possible.

During his recent press conference in Hungary, Vladimir Putin has confirmed that the Ukrainian forces in Debaltsevo has been defeated. He also confirmed that the US has been sending weapons to the junta and he added that he was absolutely sure that while this could kill more people, it would make no difference at all because the Ukrainian soldiers have no desire to fight whereas the morale of the Novorussians was extremely strong.

The most amazing event of the day though is Petro Poroshenko's continual denial that there is any Debaltsevo cauldron at all. Apparently the junta is in such a shock from the recent

events that the freaks in Kiev has decided to simply completely deny the reality of it all. This is an extremely misguided strategy because even though the Russian media has now been banned on Ukrainian cable and radio stations, and *the entire Russian press corps has had its accreditation in the Ukraine canceled*, it is still accessible on the Internet and information about the current events is easily transmitted simply by phone (including phone calls from junta forces inside the cauldron). So while the freaks in the Rada and the government can go into the “deep denial” mode, the population is informed about the reality and rumors will, if anything, only amplify the magnitude of the disaster.

[I would not be most surprised at all if the hardcore crazies à la Iarosh & Co. now turn against Poroshenko. It will be interesting to see how “Iats” and Turchinov will position themselves - my feeling is that they will all turn against Poroshenko next.]

I think that what we are witnessing these days is truly a historical event. While the defeat in Debaltsevo is tactical in its dimension, it will most definitely have serious operational consequences and possibly even strategic ones. Though I cannot say that with any degree of confidence I am getting the strong feeling that the entire Ukrainian military has reached the famous “breaking point” I often mentioned here in the past: the point were regardless of your remaining capabilities the entire organization of your military suddenly and rapidly breaks down. Yes, I know, the rest of the front is currently stable, but I think that the defeat in Debaltsevo will have a crippling effect on the morale of all the junta forces. Not only that, but as soon as the cauldron is fully eliminated, the Novorussian forces who took it will be available for operations elsewhere.

Think about it: a number of key locations absorbed a huge amount of Novorussian forces, especially the Donetsk airport (which was used to shell Donetsk), the Debaltsevo pocket (which was used to shell Gorlovka, which threatened the Donetsk-Gorlovka-Lugansk axis and which could be used to mount an attack on either Donetsk or Lugansk) and the town of Peski which was used to support the junta forces at the Donetsk airport. They are now all in Novorussian hands. The question now is where can they turn next?

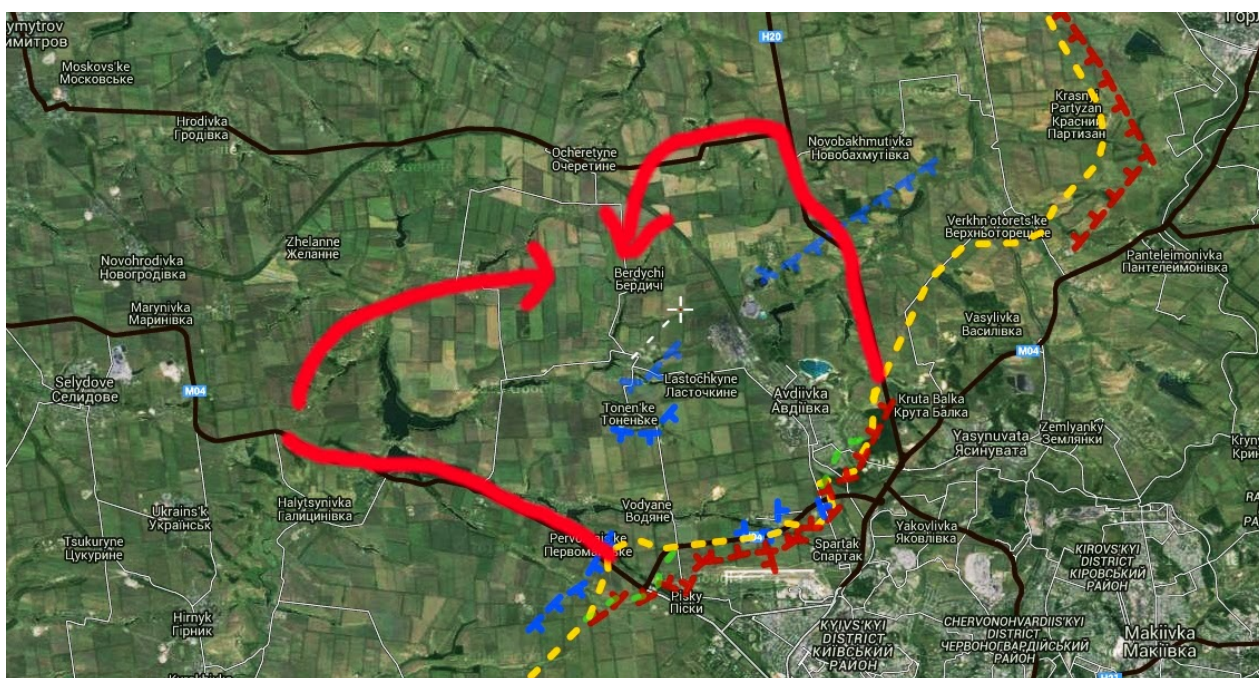
For the time being, the Novorussians are playing it very “good boys”. They have even begun to withdraw their heavy weapons even though the junta has not (they were supposed to do that simultaneously). But let’s not be naive here: they are doing so because they know that it is safe for them to do it, not because they have any trust in the Minsk Agreement 2 (MA2) or, even less so in the junta. The Novorussian infantry (and armor) is so superior to the junta’s that they can afford to do so at very little cost to themselves. But since everybody understands that MA2 is impossible to comply with, it is obvious for all the parties involved that the conflict will resume. When that happens, it will be in a dramatically different context from the one this winter.

First, the Novorussians are, for the first time, adequately armed, equipped and supplied. Second, the Debaltsevo operation has shown that for the first time the LNR and DNR forces are capable of working together. Even Mozgovoi, who has less than good things to say about Zakharchenko or Plotnitsky in political terms, is playing it by the same book militarily and all the Novorussian forces appear to have finally been placed under a single command. Third, the two major weaknesses of the Novorussian positions have now been removed and that is freeing a lot of crack troops for other fronts.

Take the case of Mariupol for example. The junta forces there have tried to built an attack

in the general direction of Novoazovsk. All they did was to penetrate a couple of kilometers into the no mans land between the two sides and then they were rather easily stopped. Now that Novorussian crack forces will soon become available, a Novorussian counter-offensive in Mariupol becomes a very real threat to the junta forces in the city. Until now, any such attack by the Novorussians was risky due to the possibility of a junta flanking maneuver the the danger to be cut off from the rest of the Novorussian forces, but that danger has now receded not only due to the availability of Novorussian forces, but also due to the crushed morale of the junta units.

An other interesting option has been mentioned by anti-maidan's (very good) military specialist Andrei Basketok who predicts a Novorussian attack along the M4 and N20 in the direction of Karlovka and Avdeevka followed by a pincer attack to surround the junta forces once again (shown in red on this map):



Possible Karlovka-Avdeevka offensive

The real problem for Kiev is that more or less all of the current line of contact can become a potential counter-offensive point for the Novorussians who, by the way, have never concealed their desire to get back all of the historical Novorussian lands. So while the current (relative) cease-fire is all nice and dandy, I think that by this spring, when the Novorussians will have reinforced their infantry with up to 100'00 more men the situation for the Kiev regime will become absolutely horrific and no amount of US weapon deliveries will change that. This might well be the beginning of the end for the Nazi experiment in Kiev.

The implications for the AngloZionist empire are rather clear: if the 1%ers have any kind of sense of reality left, they should toss out Poroshenko and the rest of the crazies and foster some kind of government of technocrats in charge of drafting a new constitution and organizing a referendum on federalization simply because the folks in Kiev better negotiate while there still is something left to negotiate then to way to be hiding in a surrounded bunker like their hero Hitler did. Alas, I don't think Uncle Sam or the Eurocretins have any common sense left in them.

Whatever may be the case, by the ballot or by the bullet, but we **are** winning.

The Saker

PS: to fully measure the level of delusional insanity of the junta in Kiev here is the full transcript of the [latest statement by Poroshenko](#) about the Debaltsevo situation:

I can inform now that this morning the Armed Forces of Ukraine together with the National Guard completed the operation on the planned and organized withdrawal of a part of units from Debaltsevo. We can say that 80% of troops have been already withdrawn. We are waiting for two more columns. Warriors of the 128th brigade, parts of units of the 30th brigade, the rest of the 25th and the 40th battalions, Special Forces, the National Guard and the police have already left the area.

We can assert that the Armed Forces of Ukraine have fulfilled their tasks completely. This position and success were urgently necessary for us in the course of the Minsk negotiations and after them. We managed to show to the whole world the true face of bandits-separatists backed by Russia, which acted as guarantor and direct participant of the Minsk negotiations.

We were asserting and proved: Debaltsevo was under our control, there was no encirclement, and our troops left the area in a planned and organized manner with all the heavy weaponry: tanks, APCs, self-propelled artillery and vehicles.

Commanders are working with their personnel. We are waiting for one more column, one more company. Having withdrawn the combat patrol posts to the new defense line, we have preserved the bridgehead for the defense of the state.

It is a strong evidence of combat readiness of the Armed Forces and efficiency of the military command. I can say that despite tough artillery and MLRS shelling, according to the recent data, we have 30 wounded out of more than 2,000 warriors. The information is being collected and may be clarified.

I would like to say that Russia, which yesterday required the Ukrainian warriors to lay down arms, raise the white flag and surrender, was put to shame by the given actions. Ukrainian warriors honorably approved the high rank of the Ukrainian Defender of the Homeland. As I promised, they repelled those who tried to encircle them and left Debaltsevo pursuant to my command, which I gave yesterday, when Russian servicemen forbade the OSCE representatives to come to Debaltsevo to reaffirm our readiness to begin the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and demonstrate the absence of encirclement. They knew it was not true. We demonstrated and proved that with our operation.

We are holding the new defense lines. In the course of my negotiations with leaders of the United States and the EU, I demanded a firm reaction from the world to Russia's brutal violation of the Minsk agreements, the ceasefire regime and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry. We will prepare organized and coordinated actions together.

I have convened the NSDC meeting for this evening. Now, I am departing to the front to meet those who left Debaltsevo. I am honored to shake hands and thank Ukrainian heroes.

Today, my Decree on awarding the high title of Hero of Ukraine to commander of the 128th Mukacheve mining-infantry brigade Serhiy Shaptala will be proclaimed. Ukraine is

proud of such heroes. Internal stability will not be undermined by the battalions “everything is lost” and “this is the end”, lies about a lot of soldiers murdered yesterday, encircled roadblocks and Ukrainian warriors without ammunition, food and water. It is not a Ukrainian scenario. I am confident that those who were spreading it expected a different result. Fortunately, we successfully completed the operation and will have an opportunity to further defend the state.

UPDATE: interestingly, the NYT had a very different view of what has really taken place. In an article entitled “[A Bloody Retreat From Debaltsevo as Ukrainian Forces Suddenly Withdraw](#)” the NYT wrote that “Mr. Poroshenko sought to cast the retreat in a positive light, but the loss of the town was clearly **a devastating setback for the army**”. The fact that even the NYT has a more realistic assessment of what happened than Poroshenko is a powerful indicator of how totally out of touch the junta propaganda really is.

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