

Washington Threatens to Intervene Militarily in East Ukraine. Danger of Direct Clash between US and Russian Forces?

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In a reckless maneuver posing the risk of direct clashes between the United States and Russia, Washington is moving to escalate the civil war in east Ukraine by directly involving US forces in the targeting of Russian-backed separatist groups.

The Pentagon and the CIA have drawn up plans for providing “real time” information on the location of missile batteries or other targets controlled by pro-Russian forces. While the White House has yet to announce a decision on the precise course of action it will follow, the plans to escalate US involvement are strongly supported by Secretary of State John Kerry.

Discussion of the strategy makes clear that it amounts to a plan for US forces to direct fire against not only pro-Russian forces, but at Russia itself. An anonymous US official interviewed by the *New York Times* claimed that the White House has been “cautious to date about things that could directly hit Russia — principally its territory,” as well as its military equipment.

Reed Foster, an analyst for defense consultancy IHS Jane’s, warned that while providing targeting location data may seem like a solution, “the actual destruction of these mobile launchers by Ukrainian forces may prove quite a bit more difficult.”

The *Times* also reported that

“trucks transporting the missiles move frequently, often back and forth across the border. And if any strikes missed their targets, they could cause civilian casualties or land in Russia, giving Mr. Putin an excuse to enlarge the conflict.”

A senior official aware of the planning stated that the US military “could do it easily and be very effective, but there are issues of escalation with the Russians, and the decision about whether it’s wise to do it” is complex.

While US officials have not spelled out the details of their operational planning to the people of the United States or of the world, there is every indication that they are preparing for large-scale war with Russia. Speaking on Thursday at the Aspen Security Forum, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey, the head of the US military, said that the Pentagon was revisiting Cold War-era contingency plans, “looking inside of our own readiness models to look at things we haven’t had to look at for 20 years.”

“Putin may light a fire that he loses control over,” Dempsey said. “There’s a rising tide of nationalism in Europe right now that has been created in many ways by these Russian activities.”

Claims by US officials that the government is seeking to assist the Kiev regime without risking war with Russia, and that Russians are the aggressor, are simply absurd. Washington’s discussion of a military strategy of attacking Russian or pro-Russian forces is a reckless provocation. One only need imagine how furiously Washington would react if Russia started giving targeting information to Mexican officials for attacks on US soil to see how provocative the US government’s actions are.

The US government is intervening in an increasingly bloody and chaotic conflict in east Ukraine. The Western-backed Kiev regime’s forces advanced against the Russian-backed separatists on multiple fronts Sunday, trying to seize the crash site of Malaysian airlines flight MH17 and the region’s largest city, Donetsk.

Andriy Lysenko, a spokesperson for Ukraine’s Security Council, told reporters that Ukrainian forces are “aiming to get there and liberate this territory so that we can guarantee that international experts can carry out a 100-percent investigation of the site and get all proof needed to deduce the real reason for this tragedy.”

Alexander Hug, the deputy head for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s (OSCE) monitoring mission in Ukraine, said on Sunday that due to heavy fighting and shelling in the area, OSCE observers would not attempt to reach the crash site until Monday.

Heavy fighting near the coal mining town of Torez forced Dutch police officers already dispatched to Ukraine to turn back after an initial attempt to reach the crash site. There were reports on Sunday of shelling to the north of the city, as well the sounding of air raid sirens.

Health officials reported that 13 people were killed in fighting in Horlivka, a city of approximately 350,000 about 27 miles northwest of Donetsk. Shelling of Horlivka by pro-regime forces reportedly resulted in damage to a maternity clinic, as well as the Donbasenergo power plant. Rebel militias also reported that five civilians were killed and another ten injured as result of shelling by Ukrainian forces in the nearby city of Avdiivka.

Ukrainian National Guard troops advanced on the city of Shakhtarsk, only 6 miles from the main crash site. According to a report by RIA Novosti, the sound of shelling could be heard outside the town, and residents took shelter as air raid sirens went off and cell phone service from some providers was down.

Over the last several weeks, Ukrainian forces have repeatedly launched artillery shells at border posts and into Russian territory. A case of shelling by Ukrainian forces across the border into Russia on July 13th resulted in multiple casualties, killing one person and seriously injuring two others in the Russian town of Donetsk.

Commander of NATO in Europe General Philip M. Breedlove used his Twitter account to highlight a video uploaded to social media on July 16th, allegedly showing Grad rockets being fired from Russian territory across the border into Ukraine. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence released low resolution satellite images on Sunday which it claims

show Russian artillery firing across the border at Ukrainian military forces.

Were these allegations to be true, they would underscore above all that providing targeting information to Ukrainian forces in east Ukraine risks involving the United States and its European NATO allies in large-scale war with Russia. There are also concerns in Washington, due to likely Russian infiltration of Ukrainian intelligence and army units, that information provided to the Kiev regime would be transferred to the separatists, giving them enough advanced warning to move their equipment to evade attack.

If this is a concern, Washington will likely deepen its collaboration with the most far-right elements of the Kiev regime's forces, which are the most ideologically united or hostile to Russia. These include the fascist Right Sector or Azov Battalion militias, the newly-formed National Guard, and mercenary outfits like the US private security firm formerly known as Blackwater.

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