

## Who's the Propagandist: US or RT?

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Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland.

After Secretary of State Kerry lashed out at Russia's RT network over its reporting on Ukraine, a senior aide assembled a list of particulars, which have backfired by showing how weak Kerry's case is and how hypocritical Kerry's State Department has been.

The U.S. State Department, which has been caught promoting [a series of false or dubious stories](#) about Ukraine, is trying to give some substance to Secretary of State John Kerry's counter-complaint that Russia's RT network is a "propaganda bullhorn" promoting Russian President Vladimir Putin's "fantasy."

In a "[Dipnote](#)" of April 29, Richard Stengel, under secretary of state for public diplomacy, made some broad-brush criticisms of RT's content – accusing the network of painting "a dangerous and false picture of Ukraine's legitimate government" by citing examples of fascism, anti-Semitism and terrorism surrounding the Kiev regime.

Stengel claims he knows the difference between news and propaganda because he spent seven years as managing editor of Time. He defines propaganda as "the deliberate dissemination of information that you know to be false or misleading in order to influence an audience" and asserts: "RT is a distortion machine, not a news organization."

But Stengel offers no specific citations of the supposedly propagandistic stories done by RT, making it impossible to ascertain the precise wording or context of the RT content that he is criticizing. One basic rule of journalism is "show, don't tell," but Stengel apparently didn't learn that during his seven years in the top echelon of Time magazine.

Nevertheless, Stengel accuses RT of "disinformation" ranging from "assertions that peaceful protesters hired snipers to repeated allegations that Kiev is beset by violence, fascism and anti-Semitism, these are lies falsely presented as news."

Though it's impossible to fully assess Stengel's complaint because he doesn't specify the offending stories, the first complaint is an apparent reference to the mystery surrounding the identity of snipers who opened fire on protesters and police during the Maidan protests in Kiev on Feb. 20.

The U.S. government, the U.S. press and the Maidan protesters were quick to blame President Viktor Yanukovich although he denied giving an order to fire on the protests and suggested the shootings may have been a provocation. That suspicion of "false-flag" violence – as a way to spur on the coup against Yanukovich – also was expressed by some neutral observers on the ground in Kiev.

Two European Union officials, Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and European Union foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton, were revealed discussing in a phone call their suspicions that elements of the protesters were responsible for the shootings.

"So there is a stronger and stronger understanding that behind snipers it was not Yanukovych, it was somebody from the new coalition," Paet told Ashton, as [reported by the UK Guardian](#).

In other words, if Stengel is referring to RT's reporting about the sniper attacks, his assumption that RT was knowingly lying when it referenced a possible role of the Maidan protesters in the sniper shootings is itself false. Further, Stengel must have known that not all the Maidan protesters were "peaceful."

### **Hide the Neo-Nazis**

Although the State Department has tried to hide the crucial role of neo-Nazi militias in overthrowing Yanukovych's elected government, it was well known at the time (and acknowledged by the Maidan protesters themselves) that far-right groups had organized 100-man brigades to carry out the final attacks. There was also widely broadcast news footage of these Maidan protesters hurling Molotov cocktails at police, more than a dozen who died in the clashes.

Is Stengel really unaware of the involvement in the coup by neo-Nazi storm troopers from the Right Sektor and the Svoboda party, which both lionize World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera? Does Stengel really not know about the prevalence of banners honoring Bandera, Nazi insignias at rallies and even the appearance of the Confederate battle flag unfurled at the Kiev City Hall as the universal symbol of white supremacy?

Just because virtually the entire U.S. press corps has joined in the U.S. government's propagandized version of what happened during and after the violent overthrow of Yanukovych doesn't mean that RT and other news organizations have to shut their eyes, too.

For instance, the BBC, which is funded by the British government much as RT is funded by the Russian government, had the courage to run [a segment on the Maidan's neo-Nazis](#), noting that the far-right groups were given four ministries in the new government in recognition of their important contribution.

Most significantly, the new chief of national security, Andriy Parubiy, was one of those neo-Nazis. He founded the Social-National Party of Ukraine in 1991, blending radical Ukrainian nationalism with neo-Nazi symbols. Parubiy also formed a paramilitary spinoff, the Patriots of Ukraine, and defended the awarding of the title, "Hero of Ukraine," to Bandera, whose paramilitary forces joined with the Nazis in exterminating Poles and Jews during World War II.

During the months of protests aimed at overthrowing Yanukovych, Parubiy became the commandant of "Euromaidan," the name for the Kiev uprising. Then, in mid-April as the new regime's national security chief and facing growing resistance in eastern Ukraine, Parubiy warned that he was siccing some of his paramilitary veterans, now incorporated in the National Guard, on the anti-regime protesters. On Twitter, he wrote, "Reserve unit of National Guard formed #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this

morning.”

Some leading neo-Nazis have been brazen in their assertion of Ukrainian racial superiority over other ethnic groups in Ukraine, including the ethnic Russians in the east. Like their hero Bandera, these modern-day storm troopers would prefer an ethnically pure Ukraine.

Though it is true that most of the Maidan protesters were there in support of closer European ties and anger over government corruption, it is also true that the neo-Nazi militias surged to the front of the protests for the final clashes on Feb. 20-22. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Ukraine, Though the US ‘Looking Glass.’”](#)]

And, as for Stengel’s insistence that RT’s reporting that “Kiev is beset by violence” is further proof of RT’s “propaganda,” there’s the inconvenient reality that far-right forces have been [clashing](#) with other Maidan protesters over the past few days. Some of these ultra-nationalists want more rewards for their role in Yanukovich’s ouster and some want a harsher crackdown on the uprising in the ethnic Russian east.

### **Who’s Playing Terrorist Card?**

In his unspecified litany of other purported RT offenses, Stengel also cites “the constant reference to any Ukrainian opposed to a Russian takeover of the country as a ‘terrorist.’ Or the unquestioning repetition of the ludicrous assertion last week that the United States has invested \$5 billion in regime change in Ukraine.

“These are not facts, and they are not opinions. They are false claims, and when propaganda poses as news it creates real dangers and gives a green light to violence.”

However, regarding the use of the word “terrorist,” which Stengel finds so offensive, it has actually been applied promiscuously not by RT but by the Kiev regime and the U.S. State Department against the anti-regime protesters in eastern Ukraine though they have not engaged in behavior that is traditionally considered “terrorism.”

The Russian ethnic protesters in the east have engaged in no indiscriminate killing of civilians for political purposes, the classic definition of “terrorism.” Yet, the post-coup regime in Kiev has repeatedly announced plans for an “anti-terrorism” campaign against the east. In other words, Stengel’s “side” is guilty of what he accuses RT of doing.

As for RT’s “ludicrous assertion” about the U.S. investing \$5 billion, that is a clear reference to a public speech by Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland to U.S. and Ukrainian business leaders on Dec. 13 in which she [told](#) them that “we have invested more than \$5 billion” in what was needed for Ukraine to achieve its “European aspirations.”

Nuland also was a leading proponent of “regime change” in Ukraine who personally cheered on the Maidan demonstrators, even passing out cookies. In an intercepted, obscenity-laced phone call with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt, Nuland said her choice to replace Yanukovich was Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who ended up as Prime Minister after the coup.

If Stengel wants to quibble about whether Nuland’s \$5 billion remark was a reference to “regime change” or not – although the European association was a key issue in Yanukovich’s ouster – the under secretary can make his argument. But to ignore the obvious context of Nuland’s \$5 billion reference is again either a sign of stunning ignorance

or willful deception.

As for Stengel's office of "public diplomacy," it is a segment of the State Department that I have personally dealt with since the 1980s during my days covering the Reagan administration's Central America policies for the Associated Press and Newsweek.

Back then, some of us referred to the "PD" office as "the office of propaganda and disinformation" because of the endless distortions and lies generated in support of U.S.-backed "death squad" regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala and for Ronald Reagan's beloved Nicaraguan Contra rebels who fairly could be called "terrorist" given their proclivity for slaughtering and raping Nicaraguan civilians and for collaborating with cocaine traffickers to make money on the side.

### **The Earlier Brave Kerry**

Ironically, in those days, a younger version of John Kerry was a U.S. senator who bravely investigated these Reagan-affiliated crimes and faced attacks from the State Department's public diplomacy operatives.

Part of Kerry's punishment for being early in his investigation of White House skullduggery in Central America was to be excluded from the Iran-Contra investigation when some of Reagan's crimes and lies surfaced dramatically in late 1986.

Because Kerry had been ahead of the curve, he was judged "biased" on the issue of Reagan's guilt and thus passed over for the "select committee" investigation. Only Democratic senators who had been fooled by the lies or were asleep at the switch were deemed "objective" enough for the high-profile inquiry. [For more on the contrast between Kerry's past and present, see Consortiumnews.com's "[What's the Matter with John Kerry?](#)"]

Another irony of Stengel's defense of Kerry's anti-RT outburst is that one of the senior "public diplomacy" operatives on Central America back in the 1980s was a young neocon named Robert Kagan, whose State Department team developed propaganda themes to undercut Kerry and various journalists, like myself, who would not toe the line.

At one point when Kagan realized that I would not play ball with the administration's propaganda, he informed me that I would have to be "controversialized," that is become the focus of public attacks from pro-Reagan attack groups and thus have my journalistic career damaged, a process that was subsequently carried out.

The irony in this is that Robert Kagan went on to become a leading light in the neocon movement, a Washington Post columnist, a co-founder of the Project for the New American Century, a star proponent of Iraqi "regime change" - and the husband of Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, the recent cheerleader for "regime change" in Ukraine.

That Stengel, the current master of the State Department's "public diplomacy" operation, is now offended by what he considers "propaganda" by RT has to be considered one of the purest expressions of hypocrisy in the long history of U.S. government hypocrisy. [For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Kerry's Propaganda War on Russia's RT.](#)"]

*Investigative reporter **Robert Parry** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).* For

*a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes America's Stolen Narrative. For details on this offer, [click here](#).*

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