

Obama backs state terror against eastern Ukraine

By Bill Van Auken
5 June 2014

Meeting with Ukraine's billionaire President-Elect Petro Poroshenko in Warsaw Wednesday, President Barack Obama declared his full backing for the regime's so-called "anti-terrorism operation" in eastern Ukraine and promised new military supplies and training to carry out what is rapidly developing into a bloodbath.

Obama's proclamation of solidarity with Poroshenko, known as the "chocolate king," came amid new evidence of war crimes by the Kiev regime's military and by fascist militias fighting on its behalf. These crimes have been directed at terrorizing into submission the populations of Donetsk and Luhansk, which have refused to accept the legitimacy of the regime brought to power in the Western-backed and fascist-spearheaded coup of last February.

City officials in the town of Krasnyi Lyman in the Donetsk region told the media that the local hospital came under intense shelling Tuesday night, inflicting a number of casualties. An initial report said the head surgeon was killed by shrapnel and at least three patients severely wounded. But on Wednesday, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), which was proclaimed following a referendum on autonomy held last month, reported that regime troops entered the hospital and executed over 25 wounded local fighters.

"More than 25 people were killed, and this figure can rise," DPR Chairman Denis Pushilin told Rossiya-24 television. "This is a blatant war crime; it is genocide."

It was only one of a growing number of strikes against civilian targets as the Kiev regime unleashes fighter jets, attack helicopters, heavy artillery, rocket launchers and other weapons of war against the region in attempt to quell popular opposition to its rule.

Schools, daycare centers, housing blocks and office buildings have also been struck, sending families fleeing for air raid shelters or desperately attempting to leave the war zone.

In one of the bloodier attacks, a Ukrainian jet fighter fired rockets Monday into the Luhansk regional administration headquarters, killing five women who were talking together just outside the building. Three men in the building also lost their lives and at least 11 people were wounded. A video posted online Wednesday showed the grim aftermath of the air strike.

The Kiev regime attempted to deny that its warplane was responsible for the attack—which was caught by a number of town residents on video—claiming that the explosion had been caused by anti-regime elements misfiring a manpad surface-to-air missile.

This lie was quickly debunked by an inspection team from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which concluded, based on the line of blast craters leading up to the building and the extensive damage to trees in a nearby park, that the explosion could have been caused only by a missile fired from a plane. Nonetheless, the US State Department and large sections of the US media have continued to insist that the cause of this massacre of civilians remains "unclear."

The weapon used in the attack has been identified as an S-8KO missile, which is a type of cluster bomb that is outlawed under international conventions.

The Kiev regime has itself given conflicting reports on the human toll of its "anti-terrorist operation." The head of the operation has reported that 300 regime opponents have been killed and another 500 wounded. Leaders of self-defense groups in Luhansk and Donetsk have ridiculed this claim, insisting that the troops and militias fielded by the regime have suffered more losses than they have.

Another estimate, given by Kiev's acting prosecutor general, Oleg Makhnitsky, a member of the neo-Nazi Svoboda party, was of 181 people killed, including 59 regime troops, and 293 wounded.

Claims from Kiev that its forces are "cleansing" the

east of rebels are contradicted by recent events on the ground, with the regime acknowledging Wednesday that a border guard camp and the headquarters of a National Guard regiment, both in the Luhansk area, surrendered after coming under attack by superior forces of anti-regime fighters.

In a bid to reverse these losses, the regime announced Wednesday that it was drawing up plans to declare martial law in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. “This is a real war, and what we are doing is upgrading the legal status to match the reality,” Victoria Siumar, deputy secretary of the National Security and Defense Council told the media. “There is a decision to call things by their proper name,” she added.

It appears that the main aim of the change is to empower the government to order civilians to evacuate areas like Luhansk, a city of nearly half a million, so that it can subject all who remain to a full-scale bombardment.

The Kiev forces have stepped up their siege of Slovyansk, a key center of opposition. In addition to air attacks and artillery shelling, they shut off the town’s water supply.

In his meeting with Poroshenko Wednesday, Obama left no doubt that Washington is determined to see this criminal strategy succeed, now matter how many die. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that the military operations are being carried out under direct US supervision. The latest offensive was launched immediately after a visit to Kiev by Derek Chollet, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs.

Obama announced an additional \$5 million in so-called non-lethal aid to assist the Kiev regime in the slaughter it is carrying out in eastern Ukraine. This is on top of \$18 million worth of military equipment previously approved and is to include such items as night-vision goggles, body armor and communications equipment. He also indicated that the US would provide military training.

He met with the Ukrainian president-elect for a full 70 minutes, which came on top of lengthy meetings between Poroshenko and Secretary of State John Kerry. He said they discussed Kiev’s “plans for bringing peace and order to the east” as well as “economic plans” that are to include the imposition of drastic austerity measures against the Ukrainian working class.

Obama called Poroshenko’s installation as president a “wise selection,” even though, as classified diplomatic cables made public by WikiLeaks showed, Washington had previously regarded the billionaire as a “disgraced

oligarch” who was “tainted by credible corruption allegations.”

Obama described himself as “deeply impressed by his vision, in part because of his experience as a businessman.” This “vision” guided Poroshenko in the corrupt and at times violent plundering of formerly state-owned assets, which turned him into a billionaire.

Russia, meanwhile, has unsuccessfully attempted to advance a resolution in the United Nations Security Council calling for an end to violence in eastern Ukraine and the creation of “humanitarian corridors” to allow civilians to leave the battle zone and enable the Red Cross and other aid agencies to get in. Washington and the other major Western powers have blocked the measure, insisting that there is no humanitarian crisis.

A Russian official Wednesday allowed that Moscow was not proposing the imposition of a no-fly zone over eastern Ukraine. The statement clearly recalled the 2011 maneuvers by the US and its allies at the UN in getting a no-fly zone imposed over Libya on the spurious grounds that it was needed to prevent government forces from carrying out a massacre in the east of that country. Once approved—with Moscow’s acquiescence—the measure was used to provide a legal fig leaf for the US-NATO war for regime-change.

As the Ukrainian regime launches a bloody crackdown in the east of that country, however, Washington and the Western European powers have no interest in raising humanitarian concerns. On the contrary, having already organized regime-change in the coup of last February, they are determined to consolidate their puppet regime by stamping out any resistance.

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