

Kiev pledges to block Russian aid convoy to eastern Ukraine

By Christoph Dreier
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The Ukrainian army and its allied fascist paramilitary units are creating a humanitarian disaster in eastern Ukraine and the government in Kiev is blocking relief supplies to the population.

The United States and NATO are using the conflict over Russia's plans to send an aid convoy to the besieged cities of Donetsk and Luhansk to mount new provocations against Moscow.

On Tuesday, 280 white trucks left Moscow carrying relief supplies. The Russian government has stated that the trucks are transporting a total of 2,000 tons of supplies, including 62 tons of baby food, 54 tons of medical equipment and medicine, 12,000 sleeping bags, and 69 power generators.

The spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitri Peskov, said the trucks planned to cross the border to Ukraine at a point agreed with Kiev. The aid convoy was arranged following talks with both the Red Cross and the Ukrainian government. This was confirmed by former Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, who is functioning as a mediator between the rebels and the Kiev regime.

According to the Associated Press, however, a spokesman for the Russian Emergencies Ministry said it remained unclear when the convoy would set off. He said the convoy could cross the border in an area controlled by pro-Russian separatists.

On Monday, representatives of the US, the European Union, Ukraine and the Red Cross had agreed to allow international aid transports to eastern Ukraine with Russian involvement. According to the Russian news agency Ria Novosti, this arrangement was confirmed in a statement by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

At the same time, the ICRC requested further information on the aid supplies, declaring, "We are still

waiting for crucial information about the quantity and type of goods, as well as how and where they are to be distributed."

For its part, the Ukrainian government made abundantly clear it will not allow the transport of much-needed relief supplies, despite the agreement struck on Monday. On Tuesday, the spokesman for the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council, Andrei Lysenko, said that its forces would stop the convoy at the border. A week was needed to clarify the need for relief goods in Donetsk and Luhansk, he said, adding, "Only then will the delivery of aid be organized."

At a press conference in Kiev, Lysenko showed a video featuring the white trucks guarded by Russian military personnel and claimed this was proof that Moscow was using the aid convoy as a ploy to conduct a military operation.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Danylo Lubkivsky declared that Russia was playing a "completely cynical game." Humanitarian aid was only a pretext to continue aggression in the Ukraine, he claimed.

In another statement, the deputy head of the Ukrainian President's Office, Valery Chaly, said the regime intended to stop the trucks at the border and transfer the aid shipment to the Red Cross. He made no reference to any time frame, suggesting that Kiev planned to delay the delivery of aid as long as possible.

At the same time, NATO representatives threatened to reject any relief supplies coming from Moscow. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said Tuesday that Russia could use the aid convoy to install itself permanently in eastern Ukraine. "We have to be extremely careful," the minister said.

On Monday, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh

Rasmussen gave an interview to Reuters alleging that a Russian military intervention in Ukraine was now “very likely.” An invasion could take place under the guise of a relief operation, Rasmussen said.

In the interview, Rasmussen announced fresh sanctions as a possible reaction by NATO countries. Last week, Rasmussen promised the Ukrainian regime military aid during a visit to Kiev.

As humanitarian deliveries are being blocked to eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian army is being equipped by NATO countries. On Friday, the Canadian Air Force delivered 32 tons of military equipment worth \$5 million to Ukrainian border troops. The German government said an EU police mission in Ukraine agreed in late June could extend to training the army to fight in eastern Ukraine.

It is the Ukrainian regime and its backers in Berlin, Brussels and Washington that are responsible for a stream of provocations directed against Russia. Moscow has been placed under continuous pressure since the EU and the US orchestrated a fascist-led coup in Ukraine in February of this year and replaced President Viktor Yanukovich with a handpicked cabinet favorable to the West.

In April, the Kiev regime began military action against cities in the east of the country, where pro-Russian separatists had occupied town halls and public buildings. Thousands of people, a large majority of them civilians, have already fallen victim to the Kiev-led offensive. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to leave their homes to seek refuge.

In recent weeks, Kiev has deliberately provoked a humanitarian disaster, encircling the two major eastern cities of Donetsk and Luhansk. A spokesman for the separatists, Alexander Karaman, reported that “the water supply system, substations, medical facilities, kindergartens, schools, industrial plants, bridges and roads” had all been bombed in Donetsk.

“Today, Donetsk is virtually encircled,” he said. “There is therefore no way to bring relief supplies. Another problem is the impossibility to evacuate injured people and children. More than 3,500 refugees have assembled in the city, including many children and infants.”

According to local authorities, the electricity and water supply in Luhansk has not been functioning for the past ten days, and food and medicine are scarce.

Constant artillery and rocket shelling has also been reported in the city of Gorlovka.

The management of the city’s chemical plant called on the Ukrainian armed forces to stop the bombardment of the plant. The plant contains stores of highly toxic products, which could contaminate a region with a radius of 300 kilometers, affecting Russia as well as Ukraine.

Russia’s attempt to deliver relief supplies to the region is now being used for further provocations. Any blockade of the deliveries, and/or attack on the convoy by Ukrainian forces, would lead to a rapid escalation of tensions and the possible outbreak of a war that could rapidly draw in the US and Western Europe.

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