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Burning Ukraine's Protesters Alive. Neo-Nazi "Shock Troops" Supported by US

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For the second time in a week, Ukrainian anti-regime protesters holed up in a building were killed by fires set by pro-regime attackers with ties to newly formed neo-Nazi security forces, reports Robert Parry.

In Ukraine, a grisly new strategy – bringing in neo-Nazi paramilitary forces to set fire to occupied buildings in the country's rebellious southeast – appears to be emerging as a favored tactic as the coup-installed regime in Kiev seeks to put down resistance from ethnic Russians and other opponents.

The technique first emerged on May 2 in the port city of Odessa when pro-regime militants chased dissidents into the Trade Unions Building and then set it on fire. As some 40 or more ethnic Russians were burned alive or died of smoke inhalation, the crowd outside mocked them as red-and-black Colorado potato beetles, with the chant of "Burn, Colorado, burn." Afterwards, reporters spotted graffiti on the building's walls containing Swastika-like symbols and honoring the "Galician SS," the Ukrainian adjunct to the German SS in World War II.

Ukrainian Secretary for National Security Andriy Parubiy.

This tactic of torching an occupied building occurred again on May 9 in Mariupol, another port city, as neo-Nazi paramilitaries – organized now as the regime's "National Guard" – were dispatched to a police station that had been seized by dissidents, possibly including

police officers who rejected a new Kiev-appointed chief. Again, the deployment of the "National Guard" was followed by burning the building and killing a significant but still-undetermined number of people inside. (Early estimates of the dead range from seven to 20.)

In the U.S. press, Ukraine's "National Guard" is usually described as a new force derived from the Maidan's "self-defense" units that spearheaded the Feb. 22 revolt in Kiev overthrowing elected President Viktor Yanukovych. But the Maidan's "self-defense" units were drawn primarily from well-organized bands of neo-Nazi extremists from western Ukraine who hurled firebombs at police and fired weapons as the anti-Yanukovych protests turned increasingly violent.

But the mainstream U.S. press – in line with State Department guidance – has sought to minimize or dismiss the key role played by neo-Nazis in these "self-defense" forces as well as in the new government. At most, you'll see references to these neo-Nazis as "Ukrainian nationalists."

Turning to the Neo-Nazis

However, as resistance to Kiev's right-wing regime expanded in the ethnic Russian east and south, the coup regime found itself unable to count on regular Ukrainian troops to fire on civilians. Thus, its national security chief Andriy Parubiy, himself a neo-Nazi, turned to the intensely motivated neo-Nazi shock troops who had been battle-tested during the coup.

These extremists were reorganized as special units of the National Guard and dispatched to the east and south to do the dirty work that the regular Ukrainian military was unwilling to do. Many of these extreme Ukrainian nationalists lionize World War II Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and – like Bandera – dream of a racially pure Ukraine, free of Jews, ethnic Russians and other "inferior" beings. The slur of calling the Odessa protesters Colorado beetles — as they were being burned alive — was a reference to the black-and-red colors used by the ethnic Russian resistance in the east.

Though the mainstream U.S. press either describes Parubiy simply as the interim government's chief of national security (with no further context) or possibly as a "nationalist," his fuller background includes his founding of the Social-National Party of Ukraine in 1991, blending radical Ukrainian nationalism with neo-Nazi symbols. Last year, he became commandant of the Maidan's "self-defense forces."

Then, on April 15, after becoming the Kiev regime's chief of national security and finding Ukrainian troops unwilling to fire on fellow Ukrainians in the east, Parubiy went on Twitter to announce, "Reserve unit of National Guard formed #Maidan Self-defense volunteers was sent to the front line this morning."

Those National Guard forces also were reported on the ground in Odessa when the trade unions building was torched on May 2 and they showed up again in Mariupol as the police station was burned on May 9, according to a report in the New York Times on Saturday.

The Times mentioned the appearance – and then disappearance – of the National Guard without providing any useful background about this newly organized force. In the language used by the mainstream U.S. press and the Kiev regime, the neo-Nazi brigades are "volunteers" and "self-defense" units while the rebels resisting the post-coup regime are

"pro-Russian militants" or "terrorists." The Times reported the May 9 attack in Mariupol this way:

> "Ukraine's interior minister, Arsen Avakov, wrote on Facebook that about 60 pro-Russian militants had tried to seize the city's police headquarters. The police called for support from the Ukrainian national guard, a newly formed force of quickly trained volunteers drawn from participants in last winter's street protests in the capital. Mr. Avakov wrote that 20 'terrorists' had died in the fighting, while those who survived dispersed and hid in a residential neighborhood."

The Times added:

> "The national guard, though, pulled out of the city soon afterward …. Residents who had gathered around the police station offered an account that differed from the interior minister's. The city police, they said, were sympathetic to the pro-Russian side and had mutinied against an out-of-town chief newly installed by the interim government in Kiev.
>
> "Armored vehicles had driven into the city to confront the rebellious police, not the militants, residents said. Holes in the brick wall suggested heavy weaponry. Gunfire echoed downtown."

After the deaths inside Mariupol's police station, the Kiev regime rejoiced at the extermination of a large number of "terrorists." As the UK's Independent reported,

> "The military action is accompanied by stridently aggressive rhetoric from politicians in Kiev who are crowing about the numbers of 'terrorists' killed and threatening further lethal punishment."

The Kiev's regime's concern that some local police forces have at best mixed loyalties has led it again to turn to the Maidan "self-defense" forces to serve as a special "Kiev-1" police force, which was dispatched to Odessa amid that city's recent violence.

Deniable Forces

Though many Americans don't want to believe that their government would collaborate with neo-Nazis or other extremist elements, there actually has been a long history of just that. In conflicts as diverse as the revolutions in Central America and the anti-Soviet Afghan war in the 1980s to the current civil conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, it has not been uncommon for the side favored by the United States to rely on extremist paramilitary forces to engage in the most brutal fighting.

In Central American conflicts that I covered for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s, some of the "death squads" associated with pro-U.S. regimes were drawn from neo-fascist movements allied with the far-right World Anti-Communist League. In Afghanistan, the CIA relied on Islamist extremists, including Saudi jihadist Osama bin Laden, to kill Russians and their Afghan government allies.

Today, in Syria, many of the most aggressive fighters against Bashar al-Assad's government are Arab jihadists recruited from across the region and armed by Saudi Arabia and other

Persian Gulf oil sheikdoms. So, it fits with a pattern for the U.S. government to hold its nose and rely on neo-Nazis from western Ukraine to take the fight to rebellious ethnic Russians in the east and south.

The key to all these unsavory alliances is for the American people not to know about the real nature of these U.S. clients. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration advanced the concept of "public diplomacy" to intimidate journalists and human rights activists who dared report on the brutality of U.S.-backed forces in El Salvador and Guatemala and the CIA-trained Contra rebels in Nicaragua.

Thus, most Americans weren't sure what to make of recurring reports about right-wing "death squads" killing priests and nuns and committing other massacres across Central America. Regarding Afghanistan, it took the American people until Sept. 11, 2001, to fully comprehend whom the Reagan administration had been working with in the 1980s.

Similarly, the Obama administration has tried to maintain the fiction that the Syrian opposition is dominated by well-meaning "moderates." However, as the brutal civil war has ground on, it gradually has become apparent that the most effective anti-Assad fighters are the Sunni extremists allied with al-Qaeda and determined to kill Shiites, Alawites and Christians.

So, it should come as no surprise that the Kiev regime would turn to its Maidan "self-defense" forces – formed around neo-Nazi militias – to go into southern and eastern Ukraine with the purpose of burning to death ethnic Russian "insects" occupying buildings. The key is not to let the American people in on the secret.

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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