

Kiev's Forces Attack Civilians in Donbass Using Long-range Artillery

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In the last week, the sending of Western heavy artillery to Ukraine, with long-range missile systems, was one of the most commented topics in newspapers around the world. After the announcement by the American government that such equipment would be placed on Ukrainian territory, many experts began to fiercely criticize the measure, considering it a threat of escalation of the conflict. And, as expected by analysts and Russian authorities, weapons immediately began to be used illegally, resulting in new war crimes.

In a statement on June 6 the Russian ambassador to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, reported that Western long-range weapons in Ukraine have been used in recent days to attack civilian targets in the Donbass.

"We have taken note of the intention of the USA and the United Kingdom to supply long-range artillery and multiple launch rocket systems [MLRS] to Ukraine. ...I would like to point out that the Kiev regime has already taken this as carte blanche to... intensify the shelling of civilian targets in Donbass, where after a number of recent defeats, the Ukrainian artillery was no longer able to reach", said the ambassador.

According to him, therefore, since the long-range weapons were sent to Ukraine, Kiev's artillery was able to hit certain regions of the Donbass over which they no longer had firepower until some days ago (before the arrival of the new weapons). Precisely in those regions where Ukrainian forces were no longer attacking, civilian life was returning to normal, which is why schools for children were operating again. And, among the targets attacked, according to Russian reports, the main ones would have been schools, with several occurrences of bombings against buildings during working hours in those regions. At least one child died in one of the bombed schools, in addition to an uncertain number of dead and wounded among the adults who were working in the facilities during the attacks.

Despite the gravity of the situation, this was an expected risk. The biggest fear, however, is

that this Ukrainian ambition for new targets will reach the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation. On some previous occasions, civilian targets in Russian space were already attacked by Ukrainian artillery, which was not responded with full force by the Russian troops involved in the operation, as the situation in Ukraine was under control and in a short time Kiev would totally lose its long-range power. But as the West supplies Kiev with new long-range weapons whenever Russia neutralizes that power, the situation is starting to demand more incisive action.

Before authorizing the shipment of long-range missile systems to Ukraine, Joe Biden stated that the equipment would under no circumstances be used against Russian territory, but at all times Moscow's authorities and experts around the world expressed skepticism about that. Now, this distrust only tends to increase, as the Kiev's forces have already demonstrated that they have not changed their combat perspective, maintaining the strategy of attacking civilian targets and without involvement in the Russian operation, making it predictable that soon Russian citizens will be hit as an attempt to destabilize the troops.

Repeatedly, Moscow's authorities have stated that further Ukrainian incursions into Russian territory will result in attacks against the decision-making centers. This would be a difficult step and would mean a dangerous international escalation (since many Western advisers are currently based in Kiev), but it would be the only possible response on the part of Moscow to counter Kiev's successive attempts to expand the conflict to Russia using Western weapons. It is a scenario that Russian forces are visibly trying to avoid, but one that grows closer every day as Kiev continues to target civilians.

Worsening the situation, the UK announced that it will join Washington in sending heavy artillery to Kiev, promising to provide long-range M270 rocket systems to the Ukrainian forces as soon as possible. According to British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace, tactics in support of Ukraine must adapt in order to improve the country's ability to "protect" itself against the Russians. He added that he believes in the possibility of a Ukrainian victory if the West continued to supply Kiev with weapons.

It is difficult to think what a "Ukrainian victory" would be when Kiev's targets are almost always civilian installations, generating innocent victims, including children. These weapons do not have the ability to reverse the scenario of the conflict and prevent Russian victory, but they have the power to bring about more unnecessary victims, destruction and chaos to regions where peace had already been restored. The Russian limit is very clear: weapons cannot reach the sovereign space of the Federation. If that happens, there will be a strong response against Kiev.

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