

US and NATO Threaten Moscow as Russian Aid Convoy Crosses into Ukraine

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A Russian humanitarian convoy crossed into Ukraine on Friday, drawing swift condemnations and threats from the Obama administration, NATO and the US client regime in Kiev.

Taking back roads to avoid a confrontation with Ukrainian armed forces, the convoy of several hundred trucks carrying food, water, sleeping bags, power generators and other supplies arrived without incident in Luhansk Friday morning. Distribution of aid from centers set up throughout the city is scheduled to begin today.

The convoy had been stalled at the Ukraine-Russia border for more than a week as the Kiev regime headed by President Petro Poroshenko sought more time to carry out its brutal assault on areas in the Donbass region held by pro-Russian separatists, including the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk. The convoy eventually crossed the border without approval from Kiev.

The UN estimates that more than 2,000 people have been killed and more than 400,000 people have been forced to flee their homes since the military assault on the east began in April.

Those who remain in Luhansk face catastrophic conditions, living without electricity or running water for nearly three weeks. Residential neighborhoods have been besieged by artillery shelling from Ukrainian armed forces for several weeks. Over the past several days, house-to-house street fighting between rebel groups and the Ukrainian army has been reported in some areas of the city.

Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly told German Chancellor Angela Merkel that he felt that any further delay of the convoy would have been unacceptable given the continued onslaught against Luhansk and Donetsk. "Given the obvious protractions by Kiev on the issue of the delivery of Russian aid to southeast regions of Ukraine, which are suffering a humanitarian catastrophe, a decision was made on sending the convoy," Putin said.

The Obama administration released a statement Friday in which it condemned Russia's actions and threatened "additional consequences" for violating Ukraine's "sovereignty." The White House called on Russia to immediately remove all of its vehicles and personnel from Ukrainian territory, claiming that the unilateral dispatch of humanitarian aid violated international law as well as previous agreements reached between Russia and the Western powers.

Using the deployment of the aid convoy as a pretext, the US and NATO are threatening new sanctions in addition to those already imposed on Russia.

Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen backed the campaign against Russia condemning the movement of the convoy into Ukraine as a “breach of Russia’s international commitment” and a “further breach of Ukraine’s sovereignty by Russia.”

Rasmussen provocatively accused Russia of waging a de facto war against Ukraine in support of the pro-Russian separatists by firing its artillery against Ukrainian armed forces, both across the border and from Ukrainian territory.

Rasmussen proceeded to raise the prospect of open war by accusing Russia of an “alarming” military buildup on the Ukrainian border and warned against any “further provocative actions.”

The head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), Valentyn Nalyvaichenko, declared that the movement of the Russian trucks across the border was a “direct invasion” but that they would allow it to pass to avoid any provocations. Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said that Ukraine would refrain from attacking the convoy, but that pro-Russian separatists might take the opportunity to attack the convoy and place the blame on Kiev in order to provoke a full-scale invasion by Moscow.

On the eve of her visit to Kiev today German Chancellor Angela Merkel took a somewhat different line from the US and NATO in response to the convoy, seeking some sort of agreement between Ukraine and Russia.

According to a statement by her press secretary, in a phone conversation with Putin and Poroshenko, Merkel expressed her concern to both leaders that the entry of the convoy could lead to an escalation of the already tense situation on the ground and called for a prompt ceasefire and an agreement that would ensure the integrity of Ukraine’s borders.

The allegations from Washington and NATO that it is Russia that is engaged in “illegal” and aggressive actions are a cynical fraud. The US and its imperialist allies have been engaged in a series of reckless provocations in Ukraine aimed at inciting Russia. The American government organized a right-wing coup led by fascist forces in February and has since promoted a ruthless military campaign by the Kiev regime in the east aimed at crushing pro-Russian and anti-Kiev sentiment.

Any sign of resistance or reaction by Moscow to the imperialist maneuvers in Ukraine has been met with escalating economic sanctions against Russia and a buildup of NATO troops in Eastern Europe.

The campaign against pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine is part of a scheme by the US and the EU to politically destabilize Russia through a series of economic sanctions, political provocations and military threats. Ultimately American imperialism aims to subordinate Russia completely by reducing it the status of a neocolonial protectorate, raising the prospect of war between the two nuclear-armed powers.

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