

Washington Intent on Hampering Russia-Ukraine Peace Negotiations?

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Global Research, March 31, 2022

Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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In a bizarre turn of events Tuesday, Russian and Ukrainian delegations taking part in peace negotiations in Istanbul appeared to have reached a breakthrough. But following a [tepid response](#) by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, contemptuously dismissing Russian peace overtures as nothing more than “delaying tactics” meant to “deceive people and deflect attention,” head of the Russian delegation Vladimir Medinsky [walked back](#) the earlier optimistic remarks, saying “a gradual military de-escalation does not necessarily mean an immediate ceasefire.”

Hours later on Tuesday evening, in what appeared to be either a coincidence or a sabotage attempt, an ammunition depot across the Ukraine border in Russia “[mysteriously exploded](#),” sending thick plumes of smoke into air, visible in videos posted on social media, [injuring four](#) Russian soldiers, and effectively pouring cold water over the optimism generated by the likelihood of the success of the peace process between Ukraine and Russia.

A Ukrainian missile appeared to have hit a temporary Russian military encampment outside Belgorod, in Russia’s village of Krasny Oktyabr, about 40 miles from the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, said the Russian state-run news agency Tass. The strike would only be the second that struck a military target inside Russia and wounded soldiers. Last week, [Tass reported](#) two men were hurt when a shell from Ukraine exploded in the same area.

The Russian offer scaling back its blitz north of the capital and focusing instead on liberating Russian-majority Donbas region in east Ukraine, a task that has already been accomplished in large measure, isn’t the first time the Kremlin extended the hand of friendship to Kyiv. Last week, Russia made a [similar peace gesture](#) that wasn’t even dignified with a response by Western policymakers and went almost unheeded in the establishment-controlled media.

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin said the offer to scale back military operations was a confidence building step for the ongoing negotiations with Ukrainian officials in Istanbul.

“In order to increase mutual trust and create the necessary conditions for further negotiations and achieving the ultimate goal of agreeing and signing an agreement, a decision was made to radically, by a large margin, reduce military activity in the Kyiv and Chernihiv directions,” Russian Deputy Defense Minister leading the Russian peace delegation told reporters.

Ukrainian negotiators said that [under their proposals](#), Kyiv would agree not to join alliances or host bases of foreign troops, but would have security guarantees in terms similar to Article 5, the collective defense clause of the transatlantic NATO military alliance.

The proposals, which would require a referendum in Ukraine, mentioned a 15-year consultation period on the status of Crimea, annexed by Russia in 2014. The fate of the southeastern Donbas region, which Russia demands Ukraine cede to separatists, would be discussed by the Ukrainian and Russian leaders.

Kyiv’s proposals also included one that Moscow would not oppose Ukraine joining the European Union, Russia’s lead negotiator Vladimir Medinsky said. Russia has previously opposed Ukrainian membership of the EU and especially of the NATO military alliance. Medinsky said Russia’s delegation would study and present the proposals to President Vladimir Putin.

Welcoming the Russian peace initiative, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [said Tuesday](#) the signals from peace talks with Russia “could be called positive” but added that Ukraine would not slacken its defensive efforts until it noticed “concrete actions.”

It would be prudent, however, of the Ukrainian leader to get rid of the duplicitous NATO interlocutors and try reaching a political settlement to the conflict with Russia bilaterally if he wishes peace and stability to prevail in the embattled country, because opportunistic NATO leaders have their own axe to grind by taking advantage of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ukraine.

The Biden administration doesn’t seem particularly enamored of the Russian peace proposal that could bring much-needed relief to the war-ravaged country because, as the seasoned American politician and peace activist Ron Paul [aptly observed](#), Washington’s policy appeared to be “fighting Russia down to the last Ukrainian.”

While on a whirlwind Middle East trip in Morocco, Antony Blinken, the charismatic secretary of state idolized by diplomatic community for wavy salt-and-pepper hair and suave Parisian etiquette who has childishly refused to [diplomatically engage](#) with his counterpart Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov since the start of the conflict on Feb. 24, [derisively mocked](#) the diplomatic breakthrough achieved in Istanbul as nothing more than “delaying tactics” meant to “deceive people and deflect attention.”

Paranoidly echoing the secretary of state’s imagined apprehensions, [the Pentagon said](#) Russia had started moving very small numbers of troops away from positions around Kyiv, describing the move as more of a “repositioning” than a withdrawal. “We all should be prepared to watch for a major offensive against other areas of Ukraine,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told a news briefing. “It does not mean that the threat to Kyiv is over.”

Not to be left behind in the collective Russophobic hysteria inflicting Western policymaking

circles and the mainstream media alike, Britain's [defense ministry said](#) Moscow was being "forced to pull out troops" from the vicinity of Kyiv to Russia and Belarus, to resupply and reorganize after "taking heavy losses," adding that Russia was likely to compensate for its reduced ground maneuver capability through "mass artillery and missile strikes."

"The combat potential of the Ukrainian Armed Forces has been significantly reduced, which allows us to focus our main attention and efforts on achieving the main goal—the liberation of Donbas," Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu proudly [boasted Tuesday](#). He added that 123 of Ukraine's 152 fighter jets had been destroyed, as well as 77 of its 149 helicopters and 152 of its 180 long- and medium-range air defense systems, while its naval forces had been totally eliminated.

It's worth recalling that the Russian special military operation, dubbed "Operation Z" by Vladimir Putin, wasn't a full-scale war. It was a calculated military incursion having well-defined security objectives: the liberation of Donbas and denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine.

Those military objectives have already been achieved in large measure, as not only the Russian-majority Donbas including Kherson and Mariupol have been liberated but the battles are ongoing in the adjacent areas in the northeast, Kharkiv and Sumy, that will hopefully fall soon.

Sergey Shoigu has already proved through facts and figures how the country has been demilitarized with the combat potential of Ukraine's armed forces significantly reduced. As for denazification, Donbas was the hub of neo-Nazi Azov, Right Sector, Dnipro 1 and 2, Aidar and myriad of other ultra-nationalist militias funded, armed and [trained by the CIA](#) since the 2014 Maidan coup toppling Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and consequent annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia. With the liberation of Donbas and deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces, neo-Nazi militias wouldn't find a foothold, at least, in east Ukraine bordering Russia's vulnerable western flank.

As for the "40-mile-long" convoy of battle tanks, armored vehicles and heavy artillery that descended from Belorussia in the north and reached the outskirts of Kyiv in the early days of the war without encountering much resistance en route the capital, that was simply a power projection gambit astutely designed as a diversionary tactic by Russia's cunning military strategists to deter Ukraine from sending reinforcements to Donbas in east Ukraine, where real battles for territory were actually fought, and scramble to defend the embattled country's capital instead.

Except in the early days of the war when Russian airstrikes and long-range artillery shelling targeted military infrastructure in the outskirts of Kyiv to reduce the combat potential of Ukraine's armed forces, the capital did not witness much action during the month-long offensive. Otherwise, with the tremendous firepower at its disposal, the world's second most powerful military had the demonstrable capability to reduce the whole city down to the ashes.

What further lends credence to the indisputable fact that the Russian assault on Kyiv was meant simply as a show of force rather than actual military objective to occupy the capital is the factor that Belarusian troops didn't take part in the battle despite staging military exercises alongside Russian forces before the invasion and despite the fact that Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko is a dependable ally of the Russian strongman, Vladimir

Putin.

Although Russia lost the lives of 1,351 soldiers during the war, as candidly admitted by the Russian defense ministry, the myth of countless charred Russian tanks, armored vehicles and artillery pieces littering the streets of Ukraine's towns and cities is a downright fabrication peddled by the corporate media as a psychological warfare tactic to insidiously portray the losing side in the conflict as a winning side.

Besides the handful neo-Nazi militias and foreign mercenaries fighting pitched battles against Russian forces in Donbas, the much-touted "resistance" was nowhere to be found in the rest of Ukraine. As soon as the war began last month, the "valiant resistance" fled across the border to the safety of Poland, Romania and neighboring countries.

The opportunistic militant leaders of the virtually nonexistent "resistance" are reaping windfalls by reportedly selling caches of anti-aircraft and anti-armor munitions provided by NATO countries in the thriving arms markets of Eastern Europe and buying opulent mansions in southern France and Italy.

In the 2001 census, nearly a third of Ukraine's over 40 million population registered Russian as their first language. In fact, Russian speakers constitute a majority in urban areas of industrialized eastern Ukraine and socio-culturally identify with Russia. Ukrainian speakers are mainly found in sparsely populated western Ukraine and in rural areas of east Ukraine.

Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian together belong to the East Slavic family of languages and share a degree of mutual intelligibility. Thus, Russians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians are one nation and one country whose shared history and culture goes all the way back to the golden period of the 10th century Kyivan Rus'.

In addition, Russians and Ukrainians share Byzantine heritage and together belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, one of the oldest Christian denominations whose history can be traced back to the Christ and his apostles. Protestantism and Catholicism are products of the second millennium after a Roman bishop of the Byzantine Empire declared himself Pope following the 1054 schism between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

In comparison, what do Ukrainians have in common with NATO powers, their newfound patrons, besides the fact that humanitarian imperialists are attempting to douse fire by pouring gasoline on Ukraine's proxy war by providing caches of lethal weapons to militant forces holding disenfranchised Ukrainian masses hostage.

While addressing a meeting on socioeconomic support for the constituent entities of the Russian Federation on March 16, Russian President Vladimir Putin succinctly elucidated the salient reasons for pre-emptively mounting a military intervention in Ukraine in order to forestall NATO's encroachment upon Russia's security interests. Here are a few trenchant excerpts from the lucid and [eloquent speech](#):

"We are meeting in a complicated period as our Armed Forces are conducting a special military operation in Ukraine and Donbass. I would like to remind you that at the beginning, on the morning of February 24, I publicly announced the reasons for and the main goal of Russia's actions.

"It is to help our people in Donbass, who have been subjected to real genocide for

nearly eight years in the most barbarous ways, that is, through blockade, large-scale punitive operations, terrorist attacks and constant artillery raids. Their only guilt was that they demanded basic human rights: to live according to their forefathers' laws and traditions, to speak their native Russian language, and to bring up their children as they want.

"Kiev was not just preparing for war, for aggression against Russia – it was conducting it ... Hostilities in Donbass and the shelling of peaceful residential areas have continued all these years. Almost 14,000 civilians, including children have been killed over this time ... Clearly, Kiev's Western patrons are just pushing them to continue the bloodshed. They incessantly supply Kiev with weapons and intelligence, as well as other types of assistance, including military advisers and mercenaries.

"Just like in the 1990s and the early 2000s, they want to try again to finish us off, to reduce us to nothing by turning us into a weak and dependent country, destroying our territorial integrity and dismembering Russia as they see fit. The failed then and they will fail this time ... Yes, of course, they will back the so-called fifth column, national traitors – those who make money here in our country but live over there, and live not in the geographical sense of the word but in their minds, in their servile mentality."

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