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<http://antiwar.com/blog/2014/04/14/the-intoxicating-pull-of-proxy-war-will-worsen-ukraine/print/>

## The Intoxicating Pull of Proxy War Will Worsen Ukraine

By John Glaser

April 14, 2014

The White House has just confirmed what had been reported in Russian media that CIA Director John Brennan was in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev over the weekend.

“Ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich is accusing the CIA of being behind the new government’s decision to turn to force,” AP reports <sup>[1]</sup>. “But the CIA denies that Brennan encouraged Ukrainian authorities to conduct tactical operations.”

One would have to be incredibly gullible <sup>[2]</sup> to believe that the CIA Director was in Kiev for benign reasons, just to catch up and have tea with the new leadership.

Coming alongside this news is word from the State Department <sup>[3]</sup> that, “the United States is considering supplying arms to Ukraine,” to fight against pro-Russian militias and protesters in the east.

This looks like the beginnings of a new proxy war. If the U.S. goes down this road, even in a limited fashion, Ukraine will descend into even worse chaos and Eastern Europe will become a resource sinkhole for an already indebted U.S.

The pull of getting involved in proxy wars is intoxicatingly strong for an obvious reason: proxies do all the work. Just provide surrogates cash and guns and *voilà!* The devil, as always, is in the

details. Proxy wars are usually waged secretly and thus represent U.S. foreign policy that the American people (and indeed most of the U.S. government itself) has no say in. They usually involve supporting unscrupulous groups of people that often end up committing serious crimes (although, it's by proxy so U.S. officials typically wiggle out of any responsibility).

Perhaps most importantly, research shows pretty clearly that when foreign powers meddle in a civil conflict-turn-proxy war, the conflict is prolonged and often becomes stalemated. Each side in Ukraine is already emboldened by their respective foreign backers and therefore neither has incentive to compromise.

Beyond all of those palpable reasons *not* to get involved in a proxy war, one question that is barely (if ever) asked in the mainstream is what business the U.S. has of getting involved in the Ukraine crisis in the first place. Ukraine is not a vital U.S. interest, even as defined by policymakers in Washington, D.C. who think <sup>[4]</sup> virtually “every nook and cranny of the globe is of great strategic significance.”

Commentators left and right can holler all they want about Moscow's transgressions, but it doesn't change the fact that the U.S. has no right or legal sanction whatsoever to meddle in Ukraine.

If it's true that Brennan was conducting tactical operations in Ukraine and that the State Department is going to send in weapons to Kiev, then Americans can wait for Ukraine to get much, much worse, as both eastern and western Ukraine become emboldened by their respective backers in Moscow and Washington, neither of which are apparently willing to back down themselves.