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US defends role of Kiev regime and fascists in Odessa massacre

By Barry Grey

7 May 2014

At a press briefing Monday, US State Department press spokeswoman Marie Harf defended the role of the US- and German-installed government in Kiev and its fascist allies in the murder of at least 42 pro-Russian demonstrators in Odessa last Friday.

Harf spoke only three days after a mob of soccer hooligans led by members of the neo-Nazi Right Sector militia forced pro-Russian protesters to take refuge in the city's Trade Unions House and then set the building on fire, trapping the Kiev regime opponents in the building. Video footage viewed by millions on the Internet shows the pro-regime fascists cheering as people jump to their death, and brutally beating those who survive the plunge from the burning building.

The fascist attack was aided and abetted by the police, who stood by while the Right Sector lobbed Molotov cocktails and later arrested 67 pro-Russian survivors of the attack.

The Right Sector, which, along with the neo-fascist Svoboda party, glorifies Ukrainian fascists who collaborated with the Nazis in the Holocaust against the Jews during World War II, served

as the shock troops in the Western-orchestrated putsch that toppled the elected, pro-Russian government of President Victor Yanukovych last February and installed the current, unelected government.

The new regime, in which Svoboda members occupy prominent cabinet posts, has recruited Right Sector thugs into its National Guard and thrown them against pro-Russian oppositionists who have taken control of cities and towns in Ukraine's east. The fascists are being used to assist in a military crackdown that has already killed scores of insurgents.

Harf praised the Kiev government for its "great restraint" and attempted to blame last Friday's massacre in Odessa on the victims and Russia. She implicitly justified the mass killing of civilians by declaring that the Kiev government has "a responsibility to maintain law and order for their own people."

Amid stepped-up preparations by the regime for mass repression in Odessa as well as the rebellious regions in eastern Ukraine, including a more extensive use of Right Sector and other fascist forces, Harf's statement amounts to a green light given in advance for even greater crimes.

In a posting on his Facebook page Monday, Ukrainian Interior Minister Arsen Avakov said a special police unit comprising "citizen activists"—a euphemism for the far-right forces that spearheaded last February's putsch—had been sent from Kiev to Odessa. Authorities there banned any celebration of the May 9 Victory Day holiday, which commemorates the surrender of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union. Further clashes between pro-Russian and pro-Kiev forces are expected that day and over the weekend.

On Tuesday, Kiev appointed a new military commander, reflecting dissatisfaction, particularly in Washington, with the pace and effectiveness of the crackdown against pro-Russian militants. Former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who was recently caught in a leaked conversation advocating the nuclear incineration of ethnic Russians, called for the creation of a "volunteer army" to put down the uprising. A battalion commander of the National Guard told reporters in Kiev that paramilitaries who ousted Yanukovych were being urged to sign up for military duty.

Deputy Interior Minister Serhiy Cebotar announced Tuesday that the regime's supposedly "independent" investigation into the Odessa massacre had preliminarily established that the fire was started by the pro-Russian protesters themselves. Defying both facts and logic, he claimed that rebels on the roof of the Trade Unions House had dropped Molotov cocktails, igniting the higher floors of the building.

At Monday's press briefing, Harf put forward a similar line. Claiming "the onus really is on the Russian government," she demanded that Russia "pull their folks out of eastern Ukraine," reiterating the endlessly repeated but unsubstantiated assertion that Russian troops and agents are

organizing the rebellion in the east. Just two weeks ago, the State Department distributed to the media what it said was proof of Russian infiltration. That “proof” was rapidly exposed as consisting of false information and doctored photographs.

Harf was asked: “But what Kiev is doing now, does it qualify as restraint?”

She replied, “Well, absolutely. Kiev has shown enormous restraint. And if you’re referring to what happened on Friday in Odessa... any loss of life is horrible... but again, that started because pro-Russian forces and separatists started basically mob action attacking protesters. So going forward, we think that restraint is important, but so is keeping law and order.”

The reporter responded: “But it doesn’t matter how many people die? Those people brought it upon themselves, it’s their fault. Is that what you are saying?”

Harf replied, “No, I’m not saying that at all,” and then proceeded to imply precisely that, declaring, “But the fact pattern of who started this and who started the escalation, who started the mob violence matters...”

A second reporter raised the following: “Russian Foreign Ministry is reporting a humanitarian disaster in eastern Ukraine towns which have been encircled by Ukrainian troops due to shortages of medicine and food. And they’re also listing what they call a massive—mass scale rights violations by what they say are ultra-nationalists in Ukraine.”

Harf replied, incoherently: “Well, I think this is just the latest in the Russian version of events not matching up with what we see on the ground... It’s the Russian forces and the pro-Russian forces who crossed a border into another country who’ve been attempting to undermine that country’s sovereignty. They’re the ones who are committing these kinds of violations we’ve seen...”

Harf’s statements are typical of the lies and non sequiturs being churned out by the government and broadcast uncritically by the media to portray a criminal and provocative policy as an exercise in “democracy,” “human rights” and the defense of Ukrainian “sovereignty.” Harf herself embodies the character of the Obama administration as an instrument of the military intelligence complex in the service of the American financial oligarchy.

She got her start as a CIA Middle East analyst and later became a spokeswoman for the agency. She served as foreign policy spokesperson for Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign before getting her job at the State Department.

The actual situation in Ukraine is the direct opposite of the propaganda narrative of the Western imperialist governments and their media mouthpieces. The United States and Germany, in league

with Ukrainian fascists, organized a coup, overthrew an elected government, and illegally installed a far-right client regime.

So much for defending national sovereignty and the democratic rights of the Ukrainian people to determine their own fate.

The justification for toppling the Yanukovych regime was the claim that it had forfeited its legitimacy by mobilizing its police to suppress armed, anti-government insurgents who had taken over government buildings in Kiev and attacked state security forces. Yet, amid an uprising in the east of Ukraine—the political base of the toppled government—in which armed protesters have occupied government buildings, Washington is not only supporting a far more massive mobilization of state military and security forces, along with fascist militias, to crush the rebellion, it is directing the operation by means of FBI and CIA personnel in Kiev.

The utilization of fascistic forces to overthrow governments and install client regimes is nothing new for US imperialism. This was the modus operandi in the toppling of Mosaddegh in Iran in 1953, Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, Suharto in Indonesia in 1965, Allende in Chile in 1973, and many more, up to and including Gaddafi in 2011.

The current criminal operation is directed at the elimination of Russia as an obstacle to the imperialist ambitions of both the US and Germany. Their predatory actions, driven by an insoluble economic crisis, mounting great power rivalries, and escalating domestic social tensions threaten to ignite a war between nuclear-armed powers.

The bankruptcy of capitalism and the necessity for the development of an international movement of the working class against war based on a revolutionary socialist perspective is underscored by the type of forces being mobilized by the imperialist powers to be thrown against the resistance of workers all over the world.