

War crisis: Donbass resists U.S.-planned attack, needs solidarity

written by Greg Butterfield

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Night battle between Donetsk defenders and Ukrainian sabotage squad, Feb. 20.

Feb. 21 - Before dawn on Feb. 20, the 79th Airborne Assault Brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces [attempted to cross the Seversky Donets River](#) in Lugansk, near the Russian border, and attack positions of the People's Militia of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR). The antifascist militia soldiers drove back the Ukrainian troops. As they fled, the Ukrainian soldiers fired on the village of Pionerskoye, destroying five homes and killing two civilians.

Since Feb. 18, the independent republics of Donetsk and Lugansk in the Donbass mining region have come under heavy attack from Ukraine. There have already been multiple attempts by the Ukrainian military to break through the 200-mile ceasefire "line of contact" established in 2015, to find a vulnerable spot to begin an invasion, including one Feb. 20 at the Svetlodarsk Arc, about halfway between the republics' capitals, and one that is [ongoing at the time of writing](#) in the south of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), near the fascist-occupied city of Mariupol.

The attacks are the most intense the region has seen since the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Militias defeated a Ukrainian invasion in February 2015 at the [Battle of Debaltsevo](#). The renewed assault by the U.S.-supported government in Kiev is in flagrant violation of the 2015 Minsk II ceasefire accords, to which Ukraine is a signatory.

Since 2014, more than 14,000 people have died in Ukraine's war on Donbass.

The illegal Ukrainian attacks are carried out with hundreds of tons of weapons supplied by the United States and other countries of the NATO military alliance. Many of these weapons are in the hands of neo-Nazi battalions that have pledged to ethnically and politically "cleanse" the Donbass of its Russian-speaking and other "foreign" residents and leftist Ukrainians.

More than 150,000 Ukrainian troops, or roughly two-thirds of the country's military, is currently stationed on the line of contact, poised to invade. Strategic points are

occupied by the Right Sector, [Azov Battalion](#) and other fascist groups that have been officially incorporated into the Ukrainian Armed Forces and received military training from the U.S., Canada and Britain.

As Struggle-La Lucha has frequently explained, the [true danger of invasion](#) is not coming from the Russian Federation against Ukraine, but from Ukraine against the people of Donbass. Washington has been relentlessly pushing the government of Ukrainian President Zelensky to attack Donbass for months in hopes of provoking a confrontation with Russia.

As it has done before every major war in its history, U.S. imperialism is lying about the real causes of the war crisis in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Like the claim of “weapons of mass destruction” 20 years ago that preceded the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the hue and cry from Washington and the corporate media about an “imminent Russian invasion” stands reality on its head.

It is the four million residents of Donbass - who have lived under the shadow of war and blockade for nearly eight years - who are facing the consequences of U.S-NATO lies. They continue to resist. They need our solidarity now more than ever.



Home destroyed by Ukrainian troops in Lugansk village on Feb. 20.

Evacuation ordered

On Feb. 17, as a gesture of goodwill after meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Russian President Vladimir Putin [announced the pullback of some Russian troops](#) from their defensive positions on the country's western border.

Instead of accepting Moscow's olive branch, Washington and Kiev took this as the opportunity to launch a major attack on the small republics near Russia. President Joe [Biden once more declared](#) that Putin had "decided to invade Ukraine." This

shows that Biden & Co. had no interest in preventing a war, only inciting it.



Families are being evacuated from Donetsk.

On Feb. 18, with the intensification of Ukraine's attacks and the clear preparations for invasion, Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik — heads of state of the DPR and LPR — announced the [voluntary evacuation of civilians](#) to Russia. Priority is given to elders, children and parents. So far more than 53,000 people have been evacuated to hastily prepared refugee centers in Rostov-on-Don and other cities in western Russia.

Soon after, Pushilin and Pasechnik [ordered the full mobilization](#) of the male population between the ages of 18 and 55 for service in the People's Militia to

defend their embattled homeland. Many other Donbass residents of all genders and ages, including political exiles from Ukraine, have decided to stay and resist, including workers responsible for the upkeep of infrastructure and vital services, healthcare workers and political activists.

On the night of Feb. 20-21, as Ukrainian shock troops attempted to break through the DPR's southern border near Russia, shelling by Kiev's military [knocked out the pumping station](#) that provides drinking water for 21,000 residents. The Donetsk News Agency reported that a Ukrainian saboteur blew himself up attempting to [place a bomb at the railway station](#) in Donetsk, the capital city. [Two schools](#) were reported damaged by shelling.

Meanwhile, in a stark provocation, fire from Ukrainian-controlled territory [destroyed a border outpost](#) on Russian territory. Earlier, [two Ukrainian shells](#) were reported to have hit fields in Russia's Rostov region.

Voices from Donbass

After a Ukrainian projectile exploded outside her home, [Anzhela Martynenko](#), a resident of the Petrovsky district of Donetsk, told a News Front reporter: "The shelling has started since yesterday. The child and I did not sleep, the child was frightened.

"Why are we being fired upon? Please tell us what we did to [Ukrainian President] Zelensky? Why have we been suffering for eight years? Innocent people, children. ... There is nowhere to hide, peaceful people live here - miners, teachers, doctors, children who still go to kindergarten."

To the Biden administration, the New York Times and Washington Post, Bloomberg News and CNN, these embattled residents of Donbass are reduced to a "Russian false flag operation," "separatists" and "Russian proxies."

To Democratic and Republican politicians, like the oligarchs and neo-Nazis of Kiev, the workers of Donbass are merely collateral damage, incidental casualties encountered in reaching the goal of NATO expansion and the suffocation of Russia.

As the Ukrainian military sends exploding shells whistling into civilian areas of Lugansk and Donetsk, its Sabotage and Reconnaissance Groups (DRGs) attempt to sow fear by infiltrating the republics and carrying out acts of terror.

On the night of Feb. 18, as Ukrainian bombs rained on the world's longest gas pipeline, causing a massive explosion in the capital of Lugansk, a DRG blew up the car of the Donetsk People's Militia leader outside the government center in Donetsk. No one was killed.

Then, on Feb. 20, a [dramatic night battle](#) took place between DPR special forces and a Ukrainian DRG in the Kievsky district of Donetsk. Two DPR troops were wounded. One Ukrainian terrorist was killed, and another taken prisoner.



Explosion caused by Ukrainian bombing of gas pipeline in Lugansk, Feb. 19. Photo: Alexy Albu

Alexey Albu, an antifascist exile from Odessa, Ukraine, now living in Lugansk, witnessed the aftermath of the gas pipeline explosion from his home. He told Struggle-La Lucha: “The next day we tried to evacuate our comrades, but Ukrainian Nazis mined an important bridge in Samsonovka village. There was a big traffic jam. We drove in fields and got lost many times. When we came back we saw that the bridge was open and a lot of cars went to the border.”

Stanislav Retinsky, a secretary of the Communist Party of the Donetsk People's Republic, told SLL: "Due to the aggravation of the situation on the front line through the fault of Ukraine, the educational process, cultural and sports events have been suspended in the Donetsk People's Republic.

"Due to the increased demand, there was a temporary shortage of fuel at petrol stations. Large queues can be observed near ATMs. In this regard, the Central Republican Bank has set a daily cash withdrawal limit on one card of 10 thousand rubles.

"At the same time, card payments in retail chain stores can be carried out without restrictions. Hospitals are operating normally."

Sveta Licht, a political activist who grew up in Donetsk and returned there after the 2014 U.S.-backed coup in Kiev, explained: "The evacuation that is currently taking place in Donbass is voluntary. Everyone who left, left of their own will.

"Most of the remaining are those who left in 2014-15 and now do not want to, or their work is related to the functioning of important infrastructure, for example. Among those who remain, it is really people ready to become volunteers [to defend against invasion].

"We don't panic, we're fine. We are not planning to evacuate for now according to family circumstances. ... Plus, the elderly and children are the priority, the republic is saving pensioners from nursing homes and orphanages first, and that's right. Those who had to live as refugees will understand."

It is because of the bravery, determination and sacrifice of the Donbass people that U.S. ambitions to provoke a bigger war with Russia have been held back for the last eight years. They continue to resist, true to the traditions of their Soviet ancestors who fought back and defeated the German Nazi occupation and its Ukrainian

collaborators during World War II.

Today the responsibility of the workers of the world, and especially those in the U.S. and other NATO countries, is to extend the hand of solidarity to them and shut down Washington's war plans.

