

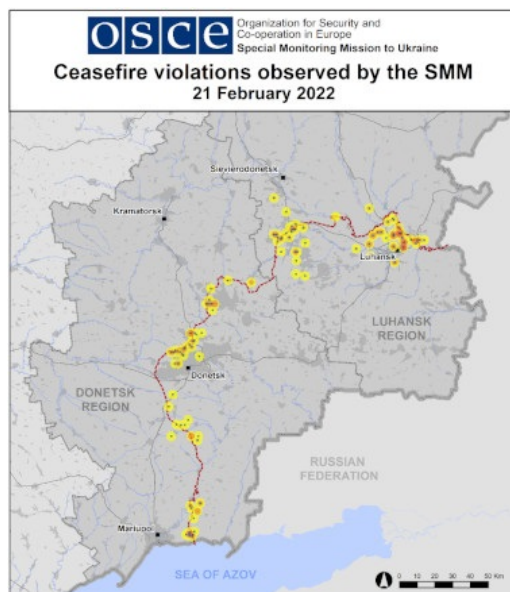
Setting the Record Straight; Stuff You Should Know About Ukraine

By Mike WHITNEY

On February 16, 2022, a full week before Putin sent combat troops into Ukraine, the Ukrainian Army began the heavy bombardment of the area (in east Ukraine) occupied by mainly ethnic Russians. Officials from the Observer Mission of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) were located in the vicinity at the time and kept a record of the shelling as it took place. What the OSCE discovered was that the bombardment dramatically intensified as the week went on until it reached a peak on February 19, when a total of 2,026 artillery strikes were recorded. **Keep in mind, the Ukrainian Army was, in fact, shelling civilian areas along the Line of Contact that were occupied by other Ukrainians.**

We want to emphasize that the officials from the OSCE were operating in their professional capacity gathering first-hand evidence of shelling in the area. **What their data shows is that Ukrainian Forces were bombing and killing their own people. This has all been documented and has not been challenged.**

So, the question we must all ask ourselves is this: **Is the bombardment and slaughter of one's own people an 'act of war'?**



Map from Moon of Alabama

We think it is. And if we are right, then we must logically assume that the war began before the Russian invasion (which was launched a full week later) We must also assume that Russia's alleged "unprovoked aggression" was not unprovoked at all but was the appropriate humanitarian response to the deliberate killing of civilians. In order to argue that the Russian invasion was 'not provoked', we would have to say that firing over 4,000 artillery shells into towns and neighborhoods where women and children live, is not a provocation? Who will defend that point of view?

No one, because it's absurd. **The killing of civilians in the Donbas was a clear provocation, a provocation that was aimed at goading Russia into a war.** And –as we said earlier – the OSCE had monitors on the ground who provided full documentation of the shelling as it took place, which is as close to **ironclad, eyewitness testimony** as you're going to get.

This, of course, is a major break with the **"official narrative"** which identifies Russia as the perpetrator of hostilities. **But, as we've shown, that simply isn't the case. The official narrative is wrong.** Even so, it might not surprise you to know that most of the mainstream media completely omitted any coverage of the OSCE's fact-finding activities in

east Ukraine. The one exception to was Reuters that published a deliberately opaque account published on February 18 titled "Russia voices alarm over sharp increase of Donbass shelling". Here's an excerpt:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov voiced alarm on Friday over a sharp increase in shelling in eastern Ukraine and accused the OSCE special monitoring mission of glossing over what he said were Ukrainian violations of the peace process....

Washington and its allies have raised fears that the upsurge in violence in the Donbass could form part of a Russian pretext to invade Ukraine. Tensions are already high over a Russian military buildup to the north, east and south of Ukraine.

"We are very concerned by the reports of recent days – yesterday and the day before there was a sharp increase in shelling using weapons that are prohibited under the Minsk agreements," Lavrov said, referring to peace accords aimed at ending the conflict. "So far we are seeing the special monitoring mission is doing its best to smooth over all questions that point to the blame on Ukraine's armed forces," he told a news conference.

Ukraine's military on Friday denied violating the Minsk peace process and accused Moscow of waging an information war to sow chaos. "Kyiv was shelling civilians, allegations it said were lies and designed to provoke it." ([Russia voices alarm over sharp increase in Donbass shelling](#), Reuters)

Notice the clever way that Reuters frames its coverage so that the claims of the Ukrainian military are given as much credibility as the claims of the Russian Foreign Minister. **What Reuters fails to point out is that the OSCE's report verifies Lavrov's version of events while disproving the claims of the Ukrainians.** It is the job of a journalist to make the distinction between fact and fiction. Once again, we see how agenda-driven news is not meant to inform but to mislead.

I would ask those politicians and pundits in Washington, DC who are agitating for pouring more weapons into Ukraine how the United States would react if Russia was arming Mexican drug cartels with weapons that were killing American citizens? You know the answer. The American public would be howling in rage and demand retaliation. If you think that Russian leaders, whose history is written in the blood of centuries of invaders, do not care about the threat to NATO presents on its western border then you know nothing of Russia's tenacity in beating back such threats. These are very dangerous times.

Quote: [Larry C. Johnson](#), A Son of a New Revolution

The point we are trying to make is simple: The war in Ukraine was not launched by a tyrannical Russian leader (Putin) bent on rebuilding the Soviet Empire. That narrative is a fraud that was cobbled together by neocon spin-meisters trying to build public support for a war with Russia. **The facts I am presenting here can be identified on a map where the actual explosions took place and were then recorded by officials whose job was to fulfill that very task.** Can you see the difference between the two? In one case the storyline rests on speculation, conjecture and psychobabble; while in the other, the storyline is linked to actual events that took place on the ground and were catalogued by trained professionals in the field. In which version of events do you have more confidence?

Bottom line: Russia did not start the war in Ukraine. That is a fake narrative. The responsibility lies with the Ukrainian Army and their leaders in Kiev.



And here's something else that is typically excluded in the media's selective coverage. **Before Putin sent his tanks across the border into Ukraine, he invoked United Nations Article 51 which provides a legal justification for military intervention.** Of course, the United States has done this numerous times to provide a fig leaf of legitimacy to its numerous military interventions. But, in this case, you can see where the so-called Responsibility To Protect (R2P) could actually be justified, after all, by most estimates, the Ukrainian army has killed over 14,000 ethnic Russians since the US-backed coup 8 years ago. **If ever there was a situation in which a defensive military operation could be justified, this was it.** But that still doesn't fully explain why Putin invoked UN Article 51. For that, we turn to former weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who explained it like this:

"Russian President Vladimir Putin, citing Article 51 as his authority, ordered what he called a "special military operation".... **under Article 51, there can be no doubt as to the legitimacy of Russia's contention that the Russian-speaking population of the Donbass had been subjected to a brutal eight-year-long bombardment that had killed thousands of people....** Moreover, Russia claims to have documentary proof that the Ukrainian Army was preparing for a massive military incursion into the Donbass which was pre-empted by the Russian-led "special military operation." [OSCE figures show an increase of government shelling in the area in the days before Russia moved in.]

..The bottom line is that Russia has set forth a cognizable claim under the doctrine of anticipatory collective self-defense as devised originally by the U.S. and NATO, as it applies to Article 51 which is predicated on fact, not fiction.

While it might be in vogue for people, organizations, and governments in the West to embrace the knee-jerk conclusion that Russian military intervention constitutes a wanton violation of the United Nations Charter and, as such, constitutes an illegal war of aggression, **the uncomfortable truth is that, of all the claims made regarding the legality of pre-emption under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Russia's justification for invading Ukraine is on solid legal ground."** ("[Russia, Ukraine & the Law of Crime of Aggression](#)", Consortium News)

Here's a bit more background from an article by foreign policy analyst Danial Kovalik:

"One must begin this discussion by accepting the fact that there was already a war happening in Ukraine for the eight years prior to the Russian military incursion in February 2022. And, this war by the government in Kiev... claimed the lives of around 14,000 people, many of them children, and displaced around 1.5 million more ... The government in Kiev, and especially its neo-Nazi battalions, carried out attacks against these peoples ... precisely because of their ethnicity. ..

While the UN Charter prohibits unilateral acts of war, it also provides, in Article 51, that "nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense..." And this right of self-defense has been interpreted to permit countries to respond, not only to actual armed attacks, but also to the threat of imminent attack.

In light of the above, it is my assessment.. that Russia had a right to act in its own self-defense by intervening in Ukraine, which had become a proxy of the US and NATO for an assault – not only on Russian ethnics within Ukraine – but also upon Russia itself. ("[Russia's intervention in Ukraine is legal under international law](#)", RT)

So, has anyone in the western media reported on the fact that Putin invoked UN Article 51 before he launched the Special Military Operation?

No, they haven't, because to do so, would be an admission that Putin's military operation complies with international law. Instead, the media continues to spread the fiction that 'Hitler-Putin is trying to rebuild the Soviet empire', a claim for which there is not a scintilla of evidence. Keep in mind, Putin's operation does not involve the toppling of a foreign government to install a Moscow-backed stooge, nor the arming and training a foreign military that will be used as proxies to fight a geopolitical rival, or the stuffing a country with state-of-the-art weaponry to achieve his own narrow strategic objectives, or perpetrating terrorist acts of industrial sabotage (Nord-Stream) to prevent the economic integration of Asia and Europe. No, Putin hasn't engaged in any of these things. But Washington certainly has, because Washington isn't constrained by international law. In Washington's eyes, international law is merely an inconvenience that is dismissively shrugged off whenever unilateral action is required. But Putin is not nearly as cavalier about such matters, in fact, he has a long history of playing by the rules because he believes the rules help to strengthen everyone's security. And, he's right; they do.

And that's why he invoked Article 51 before he sent the troops to help the people in the Donbas. He felt he had a moral obligation to lend them his assistance but wanted his actions to comply with international law. We think he achieved both.

history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v01p2/d4

Furthermore, we have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.

US imperial planner George Kennan, an architect of the first cold war, wrote in 1948: "we have about 50% of the world's wealth but 6.3% of its population" "Our real task" is "to maintain this position of disparity" [@BenjaminNorton](#)

Here's something else you will never see in the western media. You'll never see the actual text of Putin's security demands that were made a full 2 months before the war broke out. And, the reason you won't see them, is because his demands were legitimate, reasonable and necessary. **All Putin wanted was basic assurances that NATO was not planning to put its bases, armies and missile sites on Russia's border. In other words, he was doing the same thing that all responsible leaders do to defend the safety and security of their own people.**

Here are a few critical excerpts from the text of Putin's proposal to the US and NATO:

Article 1

The Parties shall cooperate on the basis of principles of indivisible, equal and undiminished security and to these ends:

shall not undertake actions nor participate in or support activities that affect the security of the other Party;

shall not implement security measures adopted by each Party individually or in the framework of an international organization, military alliance or coalition **that could undermine core security interests of the other Party.**

Article 3

The Parties **shall not use the territories of other States** with a view to preparing or **carrying out an armed attack against the other Party** or other actions affecting core security interests of the other Party.

Article 4

The United States of America shall undertake to prevent further eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and deny accession to the Alliance to the States of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The United States of America shall not establish military bases in the territory of the States of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, use their infrastructure for any military activities or develop bilateral military cooperation with them.

Article 5

The Parties shall refrain from deploying their armed forces and armaments, including in the framework of international organizations, military alliances or coalitions, in the areas **where such deployment could be perceived by the other Party as a threat to its national security**, with the exception of such deployment within the national territories of the Parties.

The Parties shall refrain from flying heavy bombers equipped for nuclear or non-nuclear armaments or deploying surface warships of any type, including in the framework of international organizations, military alliances or coalitions, in the areas outside national airspace and national territorial waters respectively, from where they can attack targets in the territory of the other Party.

The Parties shall maintain dialogue and cooperate to improve mechanisms to prevent dangerous military activities on and over the seas, including agreeing on the maximum approach distance between warships and aircraft.

Article 6

The Parties shall undertake not to deploy ground-launched intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles outside their national territories, as well as in the areas of their national territories, from which such weapons can attack targets in the territory of the other Party.

Article 7

The Parties shall refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside their national territories and return such weapons already deployed outside their national territories at the time of the entry into force of the Treaty to their national territories. **The Parties shall eliminate all existing infrastructure for deployment of nuclear weapons outside their national territories.**

The Parties shall not train military and civilian personnel from non-nuclear countries to use nuclear weapons. The Parties shall not conduct exercises or training for general-purpose forces, that include scenarios involving the use of nuclear weapons." (["The Sense of War"](#), Israel Shamir, Unz Review)

It doesn't take a genius to figure out what Putin was worried about. **He was worried about NATO expansion and, in particular, the emergence of a hostile military alliance backed by Washington-groomed Nazis occupying territory on his western flank. Was that unreasonable of him?** Should he have embraced these US-backed Russophobes and allowed them to place their missiles on his border? Would that have been the prudent thing to do?

So, what can we deduce from Putin's list of demands?

First, we can deduce that **he is not trying to reconstruct the Soviet empire as the MSM relentlessly insists.** The list focuses exclusively on security-related demands, nothing else.

Second, it proves that **the war could have easily been avoided had Zelensky simply maintained the status quo and formally announced that Ukraine would remain neutral.** In fact, Zelensky actually agreed to neutrality in negotiations with Moscow in 2014 but Washington prevented the Ukrainian president from going through with the deal which means that the Biden administration is responsible for the ongoing conflict. ([RT published an article today](#), stating clearly that an agreement had been reached between Russia and Ukraine in March but the deal was intentionally scuttled by the US and UK. Washington wanted a war.)

Third, **it shows that Putin is a reasonable leader whose demands should have been eagerly accepted.** Was it unreasonable for Putin to ask that "The Parties shall refrain from deploying their armed forces and... military alliances.. in the areas where such deployment could be perceived by the other Party as a threat to its national security"? Was it unreasonable for him to ask that "The Parties shall eliminate all existing infrastructure for deployment of nuclear weapons outside their national territories"?

Where exactly are the "unreasonable demands" that Putin supposedly made?

There aren't any. Putin made no demands that the US wouldn't have made if 'the shoe was on the other foot.'

Fourth, it proves that **the war is not a struggle for Ukrainian liberation or democracy. That's hogwash. It is a war that is a "weakening" Russia and eventually removing Putin from power. Those are the overriding goals.** What that means is that Ukrainian soldiers are not dying for their country, they are dying for an elitist dream to expand NATO, crush Russia, encircle China and extend US hegemony for another century. Ukraine is merely the battlefield on which the Great Power struggle is being fought.

There are number points we are trying to make in this article:

1. Who started the war?

Answer– Ukraine started the war

2. Was the Russian invasion a violation of international law?

Answer– No, the Russian invasion should be approved under United Nations Article 51

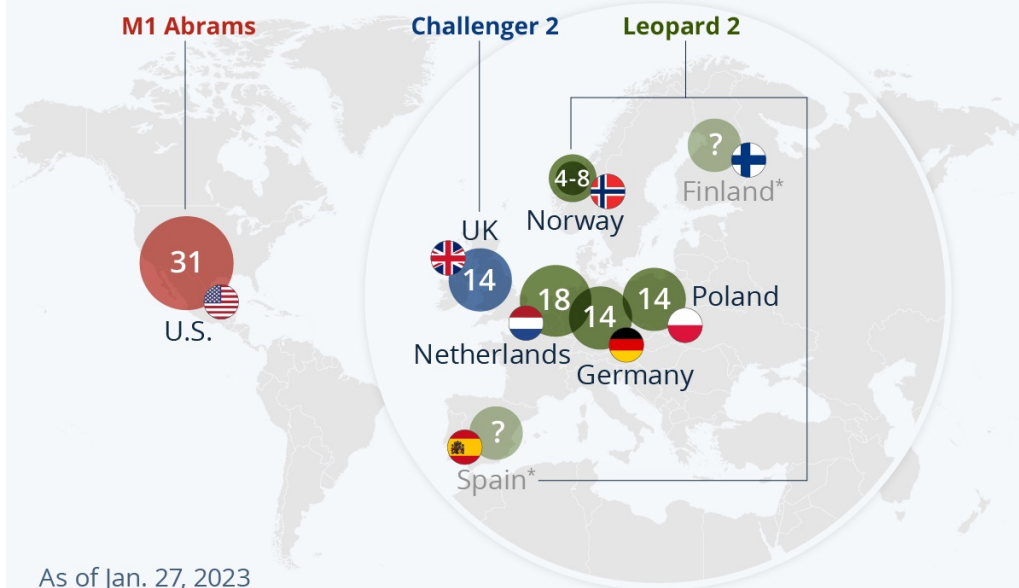
3. Could the war have been avoided if Ukraine declared neutrality and met Putin's reasonable demands?

Answer– Yes, the war could have been avoided

4. The last point deals with the Minsk Treaty and how the dishonesty of western leaders is going to effect the final settlement in Ukraine. I am convinced that neither Washington nor the NATO allies have any idea of how severely international relations have been decimated by the Minsk betrayal. **In a world where legally binding agreements can be breezily discarded in the name of political expediency, the only way to settle disputes is through brute force. Did anyone in Germany, France or Washington think about this before they acted?** (But, first, some background on Minsk.)

Who Is Delivering Tanks to Ukraine?

Number of tanks confirmed for initial delivery to Ukraine



As of Jan. 27, 2023

* number to be determined

Sources: Tagesschau/German Public Broadcasting, AP, Reuters



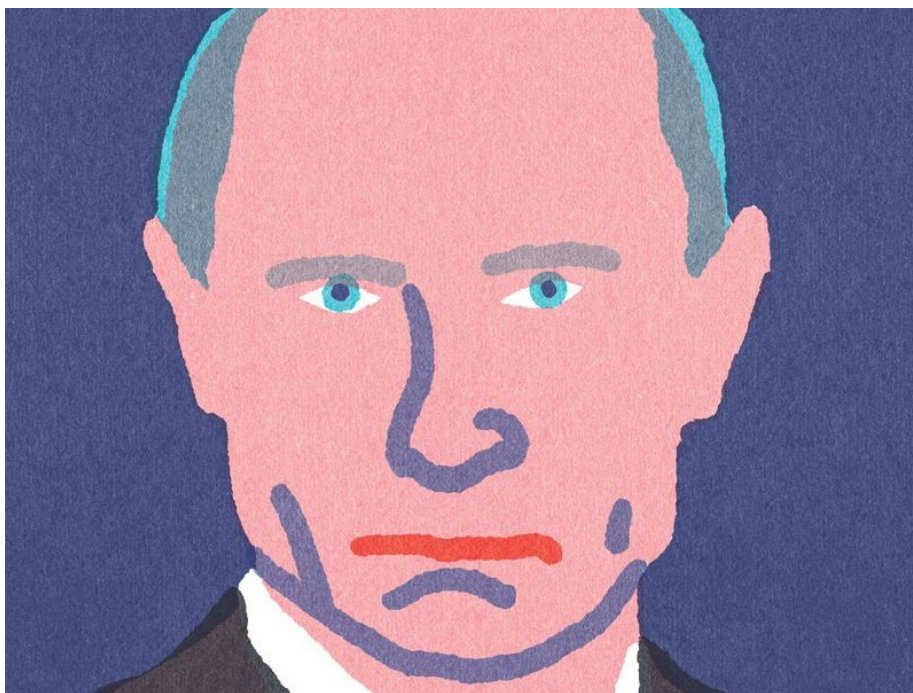
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The aim of the Minsk agreement was to end the fighting between the Ukrainian army and ethnic Russians in the Donbas region of Ukraine. **It was the responsibility of the four participants in the treaty– Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine– to ensure that both sides followed the terms of the deal. But in December, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in an interview with a German magazine, that there was never any intention of implementing the deal, instead, the plan was to use the time to make Ukraine stronger in order to prepare for a war with Russia.** So, clearly, from the very beginning, the United States intended to provoke a war with Russia.

On September 5, 2014, Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia all signed Minsk, but the treaty failed and the fighting resumed. On February 12, 2015, Minsk 2 was signed, but that failed, as well. Please, watch this short segment on YouTube by Amit Sengupta, who gives a brief rundown of Minsk and its implications: (I transcribed the piece myself and any mistakes are mine.)

(11:40 minute) "In 2015, Germany and France were supposed to play a neutral role. They were supposed to make Ukraine and follow the rules. But they didn't do that, and the reason they didn't do that is what Angela Merkel revealed in her interview on 17. **Merkel said, "The 2014 Minsk agreement was an attempt to give time to Ukraine. It also gave time to become stronger than can be seen today. The Ukraine of 2014 and 2015 is not the modern Ukraine." Basically, all three partners of the Minsk Agreement lied and betrayed Russia.** Even Putin said, "One day Russia will have to reach an agreement with Ukraine, but Germany and France betrayed Russia, and now they are helping Ukraine with weapons."... It is a shame that western political leaders engage in negotiations that they do not intend to honor or enforce...(Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has admitted the same as Merkel and Hollande)...Now even **Putin has acknowledged that it was a mistake to agree to the Minsk Accords.** He even said that the Donbas problem should have been resolved by force-of-arms at the time. (2015) Russia waited 8 years to recognize Donbas' independence, and then launched a full-scale attack this year. But then **Putin was under the impression that the Minsk Accords guaranteed by Germany and France and endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council including the United States— would resolve the crisis and would give the Donbas autonomy while remaining part of Ukraine.** Germany and France were supposed to make sure the Minsk accords were implemented from 2015 to 2022. **The collective west always knew that war was the only solution. They never wanted peace, they just played along in the name of Minsk agreement.** So, you can see, it is a diplomatic "win" for the west.....

France and Germany appeased Russia with the Minsk agreement and gave false hopes of a peaceful settlement. But, in reality, they were buying time for Ukraine to build its military. There was never a diplomatic solution; the collective west—which includes the United States, NATO, the European Union and the G-7—fooled Russia into believing there was a diplomatic solution to the Donbas conflict (but) instead, they were preparing Ukraine for a full-fledged war against Russia. So, either way, this war was meant to happen. There was never a diplomatic solution.... This is what Angela Merkel wanted to convey: "The Cold War never ended" was the German Chancellor when the coup took place in Ukraine in 2014 and the Minsk Accords were signed. Therefore her continued participation in this duplicitous game along with Germany, France, Ukraine and US—has led to this war. And she very well knows it. But, either way, it is not going to end well for Germany or France whose economies have been badly hurt. Ukraine has been completely destroyed and has become the Afghanistan of Europe. **It is the western political leaders that are guilty of the murder of Ukraine.** As it has been since 2014, the Ukrainian government has been launching vicious military attacks against Russian-speaking Ukrainian civilians in the Donbas region. Thousands of Russian speaking civilians have been killed. Russia should have taken back the territory in 2014 along with Crimea. But, then, Russia fell into the trap of the western countries' Minsk Agreement. ... **It is not Russia that started this war. It is the United States that started this war. Ukraine is just a pawn that is supported by the US and the other European governments.** And, it is a pity that the Ukrainian government serves the interests of the United States and not the Ukrainian people. ("Angela Merkel's revelation about Minsk Agreements | Russia Ukraine war", Amit Sengupta, YouTube)



There's no way to overstate the importance of the Minsk betrayal or the impact it's going to have on the final settlement of the Ukraine war. When trust is lost, nations can only ensure their security through brute force. What that means is that Russia must expand its security perimeter as far as is necessary to ensure that it will remain beyond the enemy's range of fire. (Putin, Lavrov and Medvedev have already indicated that they plan to do just that.) Second, the new perimeter must be permanently fortified with combat troops and heavy weaponry that are kept on hairtrigger alert. **When treaties become vehicles for political opportunism, then nations must accept a permanent state of war. This is the world that Merkel, Hollande, Poroshenko and the US created by opting to use 'the cornerstone of international relations' (Treaties) to advance their own narrow warmongering objectives.**

We just wonder if anyone in Washington realizes what the fu** they've done?

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