



Russia Tells Azov Fighters Trapped In Giant 'Fortress' Steel Plant: "Lay Down Arms Or We'll Level Everything"

Description

While the major southeast Ukraine port city of Mariupol has already for weeks been effectively under total siege by Russian forces, a European official cited in [The Hill](#) on Tuesday has said "Mariupol will be controlled in the coming days" by the Russian military. It's believed that Vladimir Putin also wants to see a major victory over the Donbas region by the time of Russia's Victory Day holiday on May 9.

And Western officials are already alleging that Bucha-style mass killings will take place after President Zelensky said Monday that Russia is seeking to "wipe out" Mariupol. It's being commonly estimated that there could still be as many as 100,000 civilians trapped in the city. "The Russians will continue to use artillery and bombings, and at the same time they will push civilians out of the city. So at the end of the day, we do expect a complete destruction of the city and many civilian casualties in Mariupol," the European official added. **"My fear is that it's going to be worse than Bucha."**



Azovstal Iron and Steel Works company plant via Reuters

Russian media, however, has [said](#) most of Mariupol is already “liberated” and that military forces have **Ukrainian “radicals” surrounded – in reference to fighters from the neo-Nazi Azov regiment**. Russian forces have reportedly opened a temporary ‘humanitarian corridor’ allowing anyone trapped inside the giant Azovstal steelworks plant to leave.

The complex ranks as among Europe’s metallurgical plants, with the entire stretch of the complex [covering a whopping 4.25 square miles](#). Both *Interfax* and Russian state TV have reported that so far **at least 120 people have safely exited the Azovstal plant** since Russia forces erected the corridor.

Ukrainian military officials have estimated that hundreds of civilians have been sheltering in the plant, while Russian sources have said that at least a couple thousand Azov as well as foreign fighters are still holed up in a large steel factory.

Below: purported footage showing the evacuation of the some 120 civilians from the plant...

120 civilians rescued from cellars around [#Azovstal](#) [#Mariupol](#) [#Donbass](#) [#Ukraine](#)
pic.twitter.com/ErjM9LwN2l

— Respendial (@Sviatoslav002) [April 19, 2022](#)

“Today, 120 people who were sheltering in basements in the area of a checkpoint of the Azovstal plant, residents of Mariupol, were brought to a safe place by DPR soldiers,” a representative of the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) was cited in Russian media as saying.

The final showdown for Mariupol now appears to hinge on the fate of the giant steelworks plant, with

Azov commanders now alleging war crimes being [committed against civilians](#):

Russia has begun dropping bunker-buster bombs on a Mariupol steel plant where Ukrainians are refusing to surrender, the commander of the Azov Regiment of the National Guard said Monday.

Denys Prokopenko, whose soldiers have been holding out against Russian forces in the key southern port city, said in a video message that the bombs are dropping even though civilians are sheltering in the plant's tunnels.

Why would “1,000 women, children and elderly” voluntarily move themselves to a giant steel plant to hide out with a battalion of doomed Azov neo-Nazis? <https://t.co/msaiQCXkfB>

— Mark Ames (@MarkAmesExiled) [April 19, 2022](#)

Western media and CNN in particular is also backing the Azov account, alleging further that Russian forces are preparing to [level the entire Azovstal factor complex](#):

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) on Tuesday released a purported communications intercept of a Russian ground unit commander, who said **Russian aircraft were planning to “level everything to the ground”** around Azovstal, the steel factory that is a redoubt of Ukrainian defenders in the besieged port city of Mariupol.

The audio recording released Tuesday purports to feature the voice of the leader of a Russian platoon four kilometers (or about 2.5 miles) from Azovstal.

The man's voice says, “We are expecting ‘surprises’ from Russia here.”

“What kind of surprises?” a woman's voice replies.

“Three-ton ones, from the sky,” the man replies, adding that his command **“said to level everything to the ground.”**

CNN noted that it cannot verify the authenticity of the recording, and cited Ukrainian officials and military commanders to say “the situation around the Azovstal plant to be extremely difficult, with hundreds of civilians also sheltering in the basements of the steelfactory with dwindling supplies and defenders under constant attack.”

Azov Nazi batallion simply thought long before this, that Azov steel plant would be their main fortress [#UkraineRussiaWar](#) [#Mariupole](#) pic.twitter.com/WYTWiB1Au0

— Abdulbadii (@Abdulbadii3) [April 19, 2022](#)

Earlier in the day Tuesday Russia issued a directive for Ukrainian forces to “immediately” lay down their arms and they'll be given safe passage out of the steel plant. **“Everyone who lays down their arms will be guaranteed survival,”**

a defense ministry [statement said](#). The statement called on Ukrainian [troops to...](#)

withdraw from the steel plant between 1400 and 1600 Moscow time “without exception, without any weapons and without ammunition”.

It's very unlikely that the hardened Azov militants will take up the call, and some independent media reports have alleged that Azov will shoot anyone that attempts to surrender.

Video of the Ilyich plant in Mariupol. <https://t.co/6gYsaKHMEg> pic.twitter.com/dpf2hLm9Yz

— Rob Lee (@RALee85) [April 19, 2022](#)

Ukrainian officials have said Russian has bombarded the plant from above while civilians huddle below, in underground facilities that are part of the plant. Tunnels that reach deep under the industrial complex will indeed likely provide sustained protection from even powerful aerial bombs. But it's unlikely that food and supplies will last too much longer as the fight for the fortress-like plant rages outside.

by Tyler Durden

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