



*And must have whiskey  
Oh, you know why*

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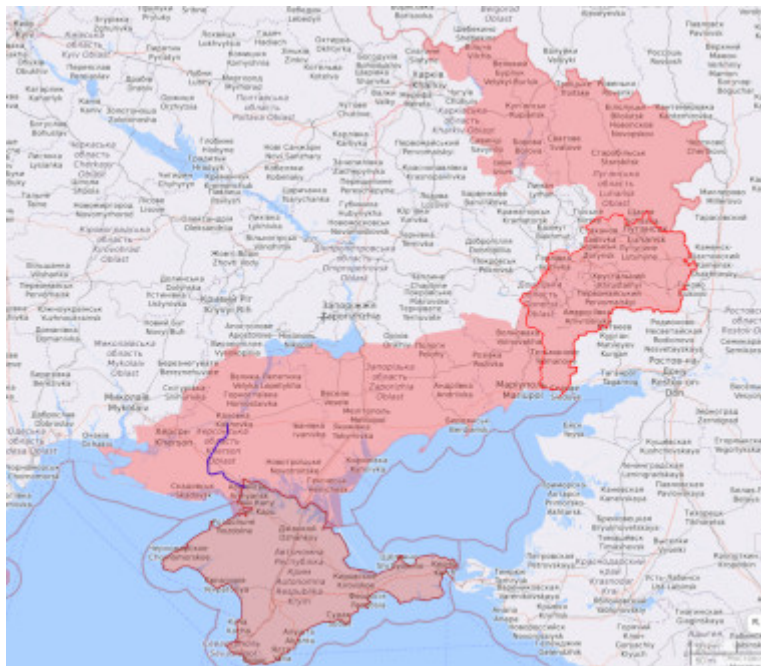
**May 02, 2022**

**Ukraine's Army Is In Very Bad Shape - More Fighting Will Only Destroy It**

The French news agency *AFP* has published a report by Daphne Rousseau from near the Ukrainian frontline. It allows us to gain some realistic view of the state of the Ukrainian armed forces.

[Exhausted Ukrainian soldiers return from eastern front](#)

Here is a current map of the frontline. Kiev is in the upper left corner.



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I will quote the *AFP* report piecemeal and add my observations:

Packed with exhausted Ukrainian soldiers with clenched jaws, the truck drives away at full speed. The troops from the 81st brigade have just received an order to withdraw from the eastern front where Russian forces advance.

The brigade walked 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) Saturday, camouflaged in the woods and under crossfire, until their point of retreat at Sviatogirsk.

The [81st Airmobile Brigade](#) consists of 3 infantry battalions equipped with [BTR-70 armored personnel carriers](#) that can be loaded onto a plane. It also has a strong artillery group with 3 gun and missile battalions, and the usual hodgepodge of support units.

As the Ukrainian troops had to walk 12 kilometers a question arises. Where are their armored carriers? Even when infantry is deployed in dugouts and trenches its transport should always be nearby (~3 km) to be able to quickly pick it up when necessary.

The most likely answer is that those BTR-70, as well as the brigade's artillery, no longer exist. From today's 'clobber list' [as published](#) by the Defense Ministry of Russia (emphasis added):

In total, 146 aircraft and 112 helicopters, 683 unmanned aerial vehicles, 281 anti-aircraft missile systems, **2,756 tanks and other armored combat vehicles**, 316 multiple launch rocket systems, 1,234 field artillery and mortars, as well as **2,563 units of special military vehicles** of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were destroyed during the operation.

Those numbers will be, like all such counts, somewhat exaggerated. But they do tell a story.

Sviatogirsk, the extraction point for the troops, is some 10 kilometers southeast of Iziurm which the Russian forces have taken a while ago.

More from the [AFP piece](#):

For a month, the 81st -- whose motto is "always first" -- battled to push back the Russian advance in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region where Moscow's troops move forward slowly, taking villages one by one.

"Everyone understands that we must guard the line here, we cannot let the enemy move closer, we try to hold it with all our force," says lieutenant Yevgen Samoylov, anxious that the unit could be hit by Russian fire at any point.

"As you can hear, the enemy is very, very near," he says, pointing to the sky. The line of Russian tanks is on the other side of a hill, around seven kilometres (4.3 miles) away.

The troops walked 12 kilometers and are now on trucks. The enemy is currently 7 kilometers away. Simple math will explain that with a 5 kilometer deep gain by the Russian forces.

At 21 years old, Samoylov, an officer from the Odessa military academy, finds himself managing 130 conscripts, often twice his age.

"It's my first war. I was supposed to graduate in four months, but they sent me here," says the baby-faced officer with a short black beard.

What a disaster. 130 conscripts up to age 40+. These ain't well trained warriors but teachers and car mechanics or farmers drafted into the war. With 130 troops the unit has about the size of a company. Infantry companies in the Soviet/Russian/Ukrainian army [are relatively big](#):

[T]he strength of a tank company is 31-40 people, and the number of servicemen of a motorized rifle company ranges from 150 people. Often a company is commanded by an officer with the rank of captain, and only in some units this position is occupied by a major.

The junior lieutenant Samoylov, who did not even finish his officer course, is leading a unit that is usually led by an officer two to three ranks higher than his. Where are the higher

officers?

More from *AFP*:

The unit swung into action on February 23, a day before Russia launched the invasion.

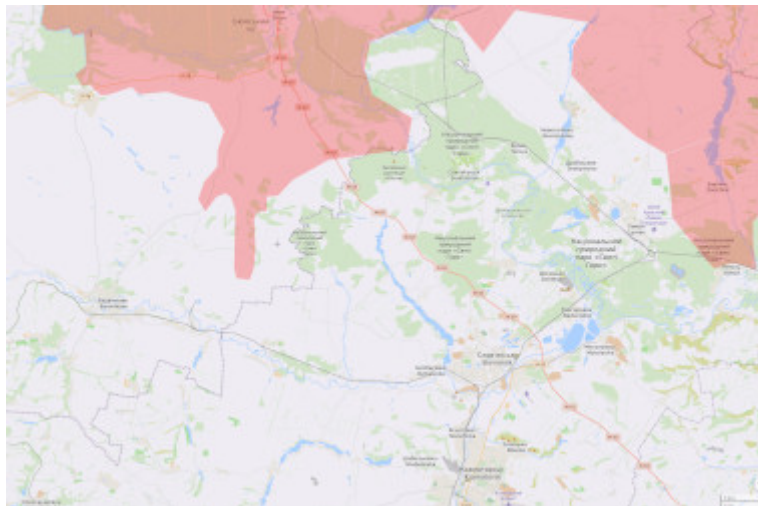
At the start of the war, they spent a month defending Iziium, which fell on April 1, before joining the fighting around the village of Oleksandrivka.

"Some really difficult battles," says the quiet Samoylov.

Iziium is at the northern front where Russian force press towards the south. There are [several Oleksandrivka \(Alexandrovka\)](#) named settlements in the Ukraine, three of them in the Donetsk oblast. There may be more unofficial ones with that name. [Two](#) of [the](#) known ones are in the north west of Donetzk Oblast some 20 kilometer southwest and southeast of Iziium respectively.

The map shows Iziium in the north, the western Oleksandrivka is on the bottom left. The other Oleksandrivka lies on the west periphery of Kramatorsk city, to which it practically belongs. It is not named on the map.

Neither town is directly on the current frontline which runs about 10 kilometer to the north. Sviatoguirsk, the extraction point, is much nearer to the front. That is where the troops likely were before they walked towards the trucks.



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The *AFP* piece continues:

In this brigade, like the others, they don't say how many people have been killed.

When the subject comes up, Samoylov's gaze becomes misty. The pain is raw.

A deadly silence takes over the military truck during the drive to the abandoned building where the soldiers will stay during their week of rest.

Samoylov's 130 men are unlikely to be from one original company. They are probably all what is left from a battalion that originally had three companies and more than 400 men.

When the convoy passes a truck loaded with long-range missiles dashing to the front, the soldiers automatically make a "V" sign for victory with their fingers before fixing their gaze once more on their feet or the horizon in silence.

Is there still some morale in these men or is that just a routine gesture? I believe it is the latter.

On arrival at the base, the soldiers unload their weapons, remove their kit and immediately go into one of the dilapidated rooms without electricity where they undergo a medical examination after returning from the front.

For the survivors, "there are small injuries on the forehead, those who were buried under the rubble during a bombing have fractures and (injuries) linked to shrapnel," says Vadym Kyrlov, the brigade's doctor.

"But we mainly see somatic problems, like hypertension or chronic illnesses that have worsened," the 25-year-old adds.

Each battalion of the 81st brigade should have a doctor with a more senior one serving in the brigade's headquarter company. That a 25 year old one is in the brigade's doctor role again points to a lack of men.

- 'Trench foot' -

The men also greatly suffer from "trench foot" syndrome caused by prolonged exposure to moisture, unsanitary conditions or the cold.

"For a month they are not able to dry their shoes... so there are many feet-related injuries, mainly fungi and infections," the doctor says.

Military boots should be watertight. During my time in the military we trained in some very muddy areas but I never got my feet wet. One wonders what quality Ukrainian army boots have.

After the medical visit, they all have the same reflex: to isolate and use their phone to call a female partner, a child or a parent.

Soldiers cannot use their phones on the front, and any application that requires geolocation is banned.

How strict is the control of those policies? Experience says that if soldiers are allowed to have phones with them they will inevitably use them. That is why Russia prohibits its soldiers to carry phones.

Four soldiers reassemble the rusty metal bed frames and sweep the floor coated with dust to make a semblance of a room.

That does not sound like a fun place for rest and recreation. Are there even mattresses for those metal frames?

"It's the moment for the guys to relax, to take care of their physical and psychological injuries, to regain their strength before returning to battle," Samoylov says.

"They'll sleep warm, eat normal food and try to more or less get back on their feet."

Those troops were nine weeks on the frontline and now only get one week of rest in a miserable place. Samoylov is an optimist. None of those injuries, especially not the psychological ones, will heal within a week. It takes years to overcome the cruelties of war and sometimes more than a lifetime.

The Ukrainian army is obviously in a very bad shape as it pushes barely trained conscripts to the frontline where Russian artillery will eat them up. That it is in such a state is not astonishing though.

The Swiss military intelligence officer Jacques Baud has worked in the Ukraine and has written about the current war ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). He describes the sorry state the Ukrainian military was in [from the get-go](#):

The Ukrainian army was then in a deplorable state. In October 2018, after four years of war, the chief Ukrainian military prosecutor, Anatoly Matios, [stated that](#) Ukraine had lost 2,700 men in the Donbass: 891 from illnesses, 318 from road accidents, 177 from other accidents, 175 from poisonings (alcohol, drugs), 172 from careless handling of weapons, 101 from breaches of security regulations, 228 from murders and 615 from suicides.

In fact, the army was undermined by the corruption of its cadres and no longer enjoyed the support of the population. According to a [British Home Office report](#), in the March/April 2014 recall of reservists, 70 percent did not show up for the first session, 80 percent for the second, 90 percent for the third, and 95 percent for the fourth. In October/November 2017, [70% of conscripts](#) did not show up for the “Fall 2017” recall campaign. This is not counting [suicides](#) and [desertions](#) (often over to the autonomists), which reached up to 30 percent of the workforce in the ATO area. Young Ukrainians refused to go and fight in the Donbass and preferred emigration, which also explains, at least partially, the demographic deficit of the country.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense then turned to NATO to help make its armed forces more “attractive.” Having already worked on similar projects within the framework of the United Nations, I was asked by NATO to participate in a program to restore the image of the Ukrainian armed forces. But this is a long-term process and the Ukrainians wanted to move quickly.

So, to compensate for the lack of soldiers, the Ukrainian government resorted to paramilitary militias. They are essentially composed of foreign mercenaries, often extreme right-wing militants. In 2020, they constituted about 40 percent of the Ukrainian forces and numbered about 102,000 men, [according to Reuters](#). They were armed, financed and trained by the United States, Great Britain, Canada and France. There were more than 19 nationalities—including Swiss.

The Ukrainian army will not win the war nor will the fascist militias. The country simply has no chance.

'Western' governments are abusing the Ukraine and its soldiers. They want to 'weaken Russia' and do not allow the Ukraine to sue for peace.

That is criminal.

Jacques Baud [again](#):

[D]espite [President Zelensky's] probable willingness to achieve a political settlement for the crisis with Russia, Zelensky is not allowed to do so. Just after he [indicated his readiness to talk with Russia](#), on 25 February, the European Union [decided two days later](#) to provide €450M in arms to Ukraine. The same happened in March. As soon as Zelensky [indicated he wanted to have talks](#) with Vladimir Putin on 21 March, the European Union decided to [double its military aid](#) to €1 billion on 23 March. End of March, Zelensky made [an interesting offer](#) that was retracted shortly after.

Apparently, Zelensky is trying to navigate between Western pressure and his far right on the one hand and his concern to find a solution on the other, and is forced into a “back-and-forth,” which discourages the Russian negotiators.

...

Today, Zelensky must lead his country under the sword of Damocles, with the blessing of Western politicians and [unethical media](#). His lack of political experience made him an easy prey for those who were trying to exploit Ukraine against Russia, and in the hands of extreme right-wing movements. As he acknowledges in an [interview with CNN](#), he was obviously lured into believing that Ukraine would enter NATO more easily after an open conflict with Russia, as Oleksey Arestovich, his adviser, [confirmed in 2019](#).

The Ukraine has lost the war. All the weapons systems the 'west' is now pushing into it are of no use as the Ukraine obviously lacks the men to field them. They will likely get pilfered and in future some of them may well be used against the 'west' itself.

They would do some bloody justice.