

SITREP 7/14/23: Popov's Sound and Fury and Vilnius Signifying Nothing



SIMPLICIUS THE THINKER

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Let's begin with the most talked about news, which is that the Russian commander of the 58th Army was removed for allegedly questioning his higher-ups, i.e. Shoigu and Gerasimov.

General Ivan Popov was replaced by Lt. General Lyamin, who was his previous deputy in the 58th. A little background: Popov was a relatively young, fast-rising general who only became the commander of the 58th army relatively recently. The 58th is the flagship combined arms army of the Southern Military District, and is not only the storied army group which single handedly trashed Georgia in 2008, but has also recently been the group handling the entire Zaporozhye front, heroically repelling the AFU's largest offensive of the war. Also, it should be noted that Gerasimov himself once commanded the 58th.

Now, to take you chronologically through what happened, Popov released an audio recording, which we now know was posted to an exclusively private group of his own subordinates and was *not* meant for wide release. This changes a lot of the calculus as it clearly shifts the perceived tone of what Popov was trying to accomplish. Initially, it would seem he was going 'rogue' like Prigozhin, and publicly denouncing the superiors, but in fact that's not the case.

The person who leaked the audio was none other than State Duma deputy and respected ex-General, [Andrey Gurulyov](#). Russian senator Turchak blamed him thusly:

Turchak said that yesterday's statement of General Popov was distributed in closed chats of the 58th army and its publication on the network is a personal initiative of General Gurulev: "The appeal of General Popov was not public and was posted in closed chats of commanders and fighters of the 58th Army. The fact that" deputy " Gurulev somehow got

it and made a political show out of it, let it remain on his conscience. As well as his other statements and comments. And Ivan's conscience is clear. The Motherland can be proud of such commanders. The army was and remains outside politics."

First, let's play the recording itself:

0:32 / 3:59



The AI translation above is a little rough around the edges, so here's a fuller translation below, to follow along:

Address by Major General Ivan Popov, commander of the 58th Combined Arms Army of the Southern Military District of the Russian Armed Forces, to his soldiers.

Good night, my beloved gladiators, loved ones, relatives. [We are a] family. I had to gather my thoughts, a lot of events happened during the last two days.

Now I can confidently say this: I've been removed from my command, suspended from my post. Lieutenant General Lemin has arrived and taken command of the army. Here, I am waiting for my further fate—[my] military [fate], changes, some proposal for further service.

I was honest with you from the very beginning. I've been frank with you. I have shortened distances with all the gladiators from a soldier to a marshal—in our case, Major General Medvedev.

Because we are the same, all of us get to experience fear equally, all of us get to feel pain and hardship equally. I do not make any distinction between us whatsoever. And I have always been honest, as much as possible, from the first day of my arrival in our army.

So honestly I tell you, a difficult situation arose (came about) with the senior leadership, when it was necessary that I either remain silent and small-minded, and say what they wanted to hear, or to call things by their names.

In the name of you, in the name of our fallen friends, I had no right to lie, so I outlined all the problematic issues that exist today in the army: With respect to the combat work and supply [organization]. I called all things by their names and focused attention on the most important tragedy of the modern warfare. This is the deficiency of the counter-battery work and reconnaissance that have led to the deaths and injuries of our brothers from enemy artillery. I also raised a number of other problems and expressed them at the highest level frankly and with the utmost firmness.

With this, apparently, the senior command sensed some danger in me and promptly, in the course of one day, made up an order. They brought the order to the Minister of Defense, and they got rid of me.

As many commanders of regiments and divisions said today, our army could not be broken from the front by the forces of Ukraine, but instead we were hit from the rear by our senior commander, who treacherously and underhandedly decapitated the army in the most difficult and tense moment.

But at the same time I will remain available constantly to all soldiers, sergeants, and warrant officers of the army—to all—absolutely, 24/7, for any problems, domestic family, rear, or combat—any problems whatsoever. We continue to work as a group. I am available to you all the time, and I am honored to stand in the same line with you. I am proud and will do everything in my power even more to make it easier for you to fight and to keep alive as many of our fighting comrades as possible. I will continue to fulfill my combat mission.

The main thing is that in the name of those who will never return from the battlefields, in the name of their memory, in the name of spilled blood of soldiers and officers in Zaporozhye, we are obliged with you to defeat the enemy to repel his offensive and to create conditions for subsequent actions. And thus to honor the memory of our fallen comrades.

Always with you, always in touch,

Yours, [callsign] Spartak.

Let me first touch on why Gurulyov may have leaked this recording. It seems clear that Gurulyov, being a patriot and ex-military himself, felt that this should be heard and seen by all of Russia. In fact, Gurulyov previously commanded this very same 58th Army a decade ago, and obviously has reason to protect it even against the MOD or other politicians. From the beginning, Gurulyov has been an outspoken maximalist, almost akin to a Zhirinovskiy stripe, calling for Russia to go all the way to the Polish border, destroy everything, etc. With that said, he's never quarreled with the leadership of the country previously, to my knowledge, and is in good standing with everyone, rather than being a 5th/6th columnist type.

As usual, everyone is now jumping to conclusions. Very few are offering a balanced and nuanced approach to analyzing the situation. It's mostly regurgitating Prigozhin's talking points about Shoigu/Gerasimov being traitors, or once in a while the polar opposite, with accusations of Popov himself being a treasonous quibbler. Strelkov, for instance, fanned the flames with his usual: that Russia is now "one major military defeat away from a new 'march on Moscow' of the actual Russian army".

First, let's lay out the facts. About 97% of everything being thrown around is either anecdotal or apocryphal or both. There is precisely one guy on Telegram who made the unsupported claim that "Popov is loved by the troops" and this is instantly taken as gospel and used as proof that "Gerasimov/Shoigu are traitors!" and the heroic patriot Popov has come to save the kingdom.

The fact is, not much is known about Popov, though he appears upstanding and there *are* some reports of him being well-regarded. But there is also the fact that, according to open source info, he led the 11th Army Corps tasked with defending Balakleya in the Izyum area during last year's Kharkov Offensive by the AFU. Which would mean he's the one responsible for what many call a "disastrous retreat" of the Russian forces. I state this not to tarnish his name but simply to keep it balanced and expose the hypocrisy of many propagandists who now crawl from the woodwork to extol this unknown commander when they had previously ridiculed his own actions without even knowing it was him.

But is that to say he's wrong or lying? No, much or all of what he says could be completely true. Gerasimov and Shoigu may be complete scoundrels for all we know. My point is simply to state that there isn't enough true data to be jumping to such conclusions and feigning understanding of a likely complex subject.

The fact is, during war time, a soldier must obey his superiors because the superior has a much wider viewpoint, seeing things under his purview that the soldier doesn't know about and hasn't considered. The same goes in this situation. Popov's chief criticism appears to stem from a perceived lack of artillery counter-battery support, and the attendant systems thereof, like presumably counter-battery radar units. Does anyone actually think that Shoigu or Gerasimov are underhandedly withholding such units from the front? If the units were available then they would likely be handed over. But since this is beyond Popov's purview, he apparently wouldn't know this.

Shoigu and Gerasimov perhaps had reason to actually withhold things from Prigozhin. After all, he enacted a self-fulfilling prophecy of attempting a coup on the country. They knew this, which is why they previously denied his request to have 200k troops under his command. In retrospect, we can see that this would've been disastrous, as Prigozhin was power-hungry and unstable.

But does the MOD have reason to withhold things from the actual Russian army proper? No, of course not—why would they? So what type of dimension do Popov's complaints take on or represent? Is he speaking from the standpoint of equipment he feels is there but is not being given? Or perhaps from the standpoint that he believes this is more of a systemic training issue within the Russian army, and that proper tactics are not being carried out to suppress the enemy?

If we take the former option, we can say that he's speaking out of order because the supreme commander is responsible for husbanding the equipment of the entire armed forces, and distributing it effectively to where it's needed. Sure, the southern Zaporozhye front is important, but there are other fronts as well, and Popov may not understand the distributions taking place nor the total stockpiles of certain types of equipment in the armed forces. With that said, such things can obviously be solved through simple communications and talking; but we don't know the character of their talks. Did he wildly complain and name-call? We have no way of knowing.

As to the latter possibility: if Popov's complaint revolves around a systemic issue with the army's tactics/doctrines themselves, then his complaint seems similarly

dubious due to the fact that these are not things you can change in the middle of an offensive. And secondly, he's the general of the entire 58th army, which means the tactics utilized therein are entirely under his purview. Thus, he would be responsible for adjusting and adapting the tactics to whatever need he feels he has.

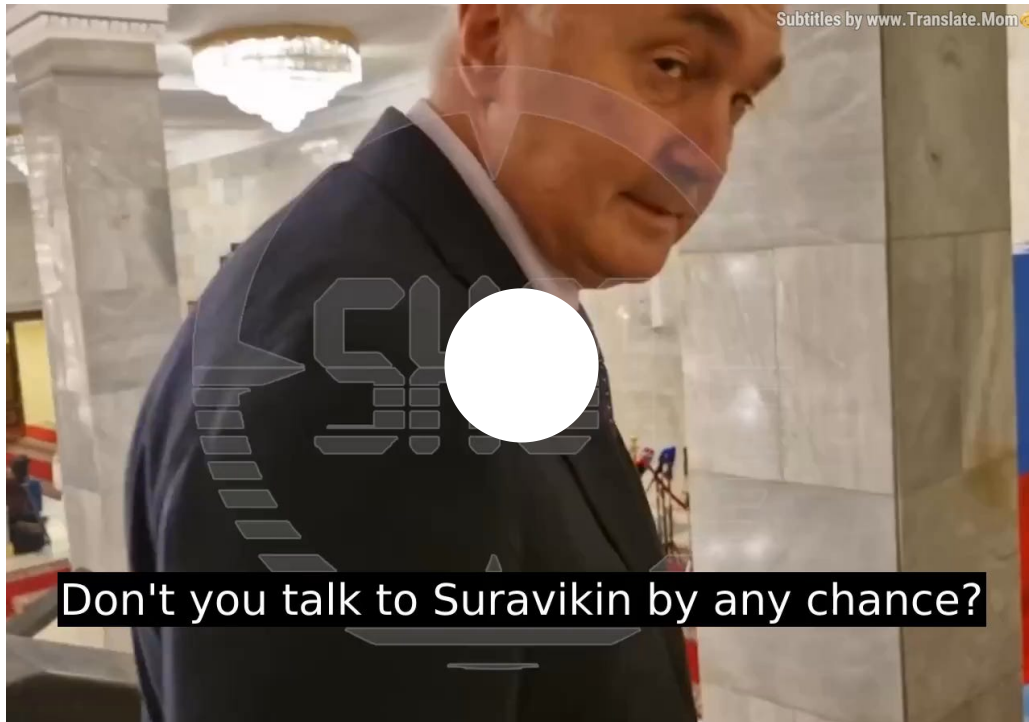
But now, let's cover the opposite perspective. Even if his complaints were invalid to some extent, is it right to boot him in the middle of an ongoing offensive? In general, such a thing is certainly not right, as relieving the general of an entire army group in the middle of ongoing kinetic action is flagrantly nonsensical.

So, what are the two main theories for why this could possibly have happened?

The first is that Shoigu and Gerasimov are merely 'corrupt/treacherous/whatever' and are trying to cement some perceived 'hold on power' by instantly squashing any and all dissent. Could it be true? Sure, anything is possible. But is there any evidence to such a disposition from Shoigu/Gerasimov? No, only the now disproven words from a raging treasonous oligarchic warlord who had a clear axe to grind. That would be Prigozhin, for those who missed my reference.

The second more 'intriguing' theory is that the Popov situation is somehow tied to the ongoing Prigozhin witchhunt. Ever since the Wagner rebellion, there've been stirrings of a hunt for other collaborators within the Russian MOD itself. For instance, in the past we know that General Mizintsev was viewed by the MOD as sort of sympathetic toward Wagner, having allegedly snuck them ammo from hidden stores. And he was later removed and given to Wagner, becoming one of their commanders.

Similarly, General Surovikin had a close affinity to the PMC unit and since the rebellion in June, there's been continued rumor that Surovikin has been either arrested, placed on house arrest, or demoted/transferred in some way. At first, it may have seemed the province of pro-Ukrainian conspiracy theory, and I myself dismissed it as such. However, there is an intriguing new video showing Chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee Andrey Kartapolov being asked by a journalist, "Where is Surovikin?"



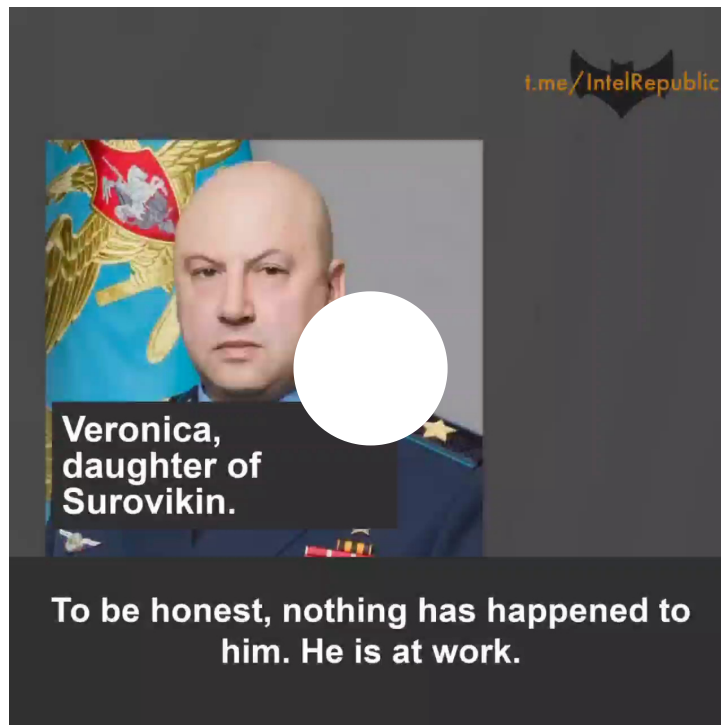
Army General Sergei Surovikin "is now resting and is not yet available," said Andrey Kartapolov, chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee.

Recall that Surovikin has not appeared in public since June 23, when his appeal to the leadership and fighters of the Wagner PMC was published

In connection with his long absence, speculation began to spread that Surovikin was allegedly arrested on suspicion of involvement in the rebellion of Yevgeny Prigozhin or dismissed.

As it says in the above, Surovikin has not been seen now since June 23. That's a very long "vacation" to be had in the midst of the most dire enemy offensive and highest level of combat intensity since last year. Russian news channel Readovka also allegedly 'confirmed' that Surovikin is on vacation in Rostov.

And for those that didn't have their ear to the ground, about two weeks ago in some kind of leaked call from a friend, Surovikin's own daughter reportedly claimed that everything was fine and he was 'working'. Admittedly, though, her voice in the call appears strangely nervous to me.



Either way, everything could be fine, or he may have been put on some type of administrative leave and/or investigation for some perceived involvement with the Wagner debacle—whether this was involvement with the coup itself, or simply a precautionary distancing for a figure known to the MOD to have been very close with Wagner. And even the most conspiracy-averse skeptics must certainly admit to the strangeness of Kartapolov’s coy demur when he gave the infamous “vacation” euphemism as explanation for Surovikin’s absence. Let’s get real here, no general is going on an extended ‘vacation’ in the middle of the most active and critical high-intensity phase of the war.

So, my point in running through the gamut of these intrigues is to make the case for the fact that Popov’s demotion clearly has a chance of being related to this; in what way, though, we can only speculate.

One final practical theory is that the MOD may simply be on edge and extremely risk-averse at the moment, in regard to tolerating any sort of insubordination, given that they literally just survived a coup attempt aimed specifically at them. After any such period, it’s only understandable that the MOD could be seeking to establish absolute order and authority. Furthermore, they would have to show that authority by making demonstrative examples of anyone going against it. Do I personally support this? No, I have no “horse in the race” and don’t yet feel that I have enough data to

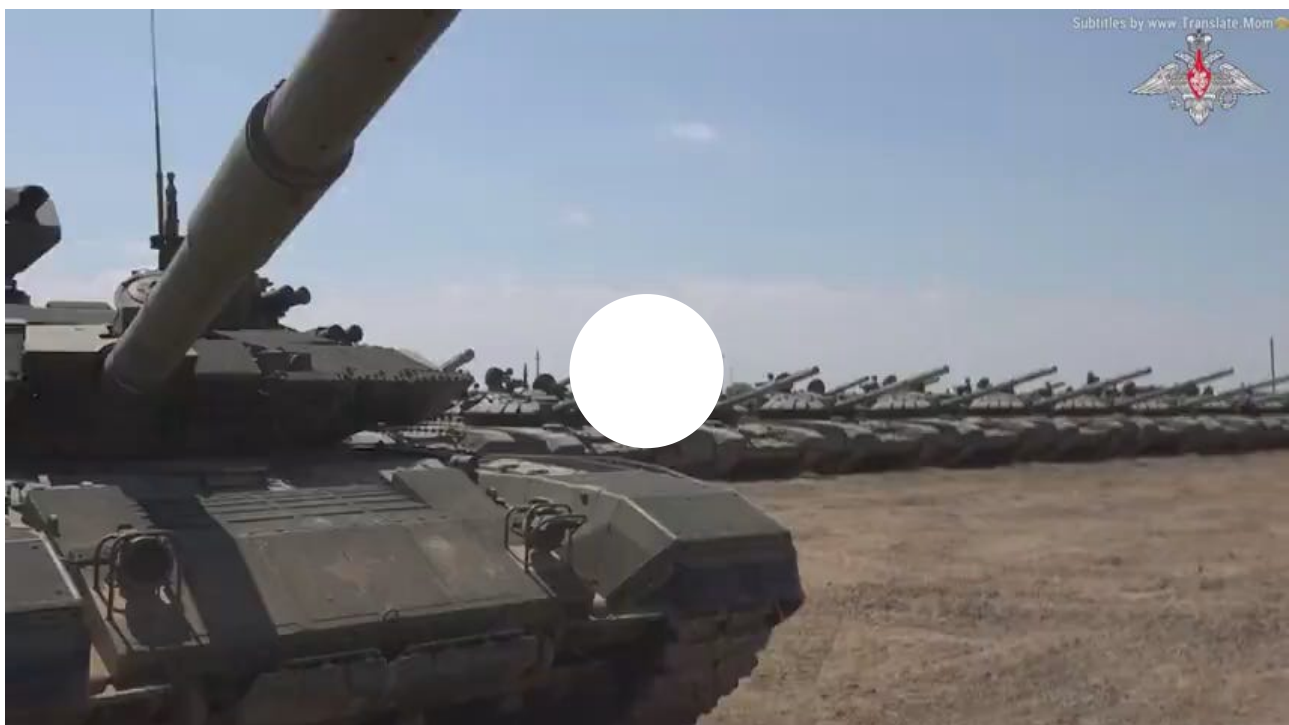
judge who's in the right or wrong, unlike so many 'analysts' willing to instantly jump to conclusions and screech out tired cliches about the cartoon evils of the MOD.

At the end of the day, Shoigu and Gerasimov have now added precisely one new critic to the previous pool of two total. We have the eminent Strelkov, Prigozhin, and now Popov who believe the MOD to be sabotaging Russia in some way. Are three people enough to form the basis of a hasty and sound conclusion? How about all the dozens of commanders and generals with the completely contradictory view, in whose interviews I watched them praise the MOD? Are their words to be discarded by way of the classical selection bias?

The point I'm trying to make is that we shouldn't dismiss or discard Popov's claims. He appears to be an upstanding commander with no 'artificial' axe to grind. With that said, he's a young commander who was clearly under the highest form of stress in his short tenure of command, as he was helming the army tasked with taking the brunt of the AFU's counter-offensive attack. Perhaps experiencing the horrors of the most intensely kinetic front of the war made him lose his cool. Certainly, the issues he speaks of are ones plaguing both sides, and certainly I believe Russia can and should do better in addressing them. Do I blame him for speaking out? No, but I can see both sides. On one hand, an army can never improve if good people don't speak out, but on the other hand, you can't gainsay or challenge your command as a soldier, this is a fundamental precept of army life and leadership.

Ultimately, I know for a fact we don't have all the details, and much of the intrigues I gave a taste of above are likely just the tip of the iceberg of what's truly going on. Until we get more of the story, we can't ascribe too much blame to one side or the other. All I know is that, contrary to all the hate he gets from the uneducated blogosphere and armchair commandos, Shoigu for his part has been tirelessly visiting every Russian arms concern imaginable, pushing them to new heights of productivity.

Here are two videos just from the *past week alone*:



And these represent only two of the four visits I've recorded in just the past month that Shoigu has made to major arms manufacturers, holding important production meetings and constantly making sure Russian arms orders are up to date and on time. What more is a minister of defense supposed to do? Are we to really believe that a man working so hard to manage Russia's industries is somehow maniacally bent on *not* providing the needed armaments to certain troops, like in the case of the 58th?

The far likelier explanation is that if he could provide it, he would; you can't provide what doesn't exist or is in short supply due to other extenuating circumstances, like needing the gear on another front, etc.

And by the way, if such complaints are so prevalent, then why don't we ever hear of them from any other people on the front? I monitor dozens of different frontline correspondents, many of whom are on the Zaporozhye front and who speak to the troops directly, releasing daily interviews and frontline updates, and the troops themselves are always upbeat and never complain about the types of lacks popularized by a few vocal outcasts. Nor do these troops or their frontline correspondent counterparts speak of untold losses on the Russian side, in fact several have specifically pointed out the great loss disparities in favor of the Russian side. Once again: that's not to diminish Popov's claims or dismiss them as unreal, but rather to put it in *perspective* and understand that such complaints are not as universal as some make them out to be.

Lastly, this is a war and Russia is really going through it. There are trials and tribulations and huge growing pains of a Russian army learning to fight in the post-Serdyukov era when it was gutted. There may be incompetence in many places but it has usually been immediately addressed and handled, with needed replacements and re-assignments handed out on an ongoing basis.

Some believe the whole issue is that the incompetence is at the top, and that Putin is too 'afraid' to replace Gerasimov/Shoigu. However, those people are unable to name any real instance of this alleged incompetence as evidence. They'll just point to something armchair commander Strelkov said from his dingy basement, or even worse, Prigozhin.

As I've said before, Ukraine's own supreme commander Zaluzhny has praised Gerasimov as being the best commander of this generation whom he reveres and whose every book he's studied. I've yet to see any sort of contrary evidence. If you have some or know of anyone that does, please do share it so we can all study it and adjust our analyses accordingly. Until such time, it appears to me that the Russian army is adapting and growing each day while overcoming the combined force of the entire Western world in a way no one has ever even attempted to do before, much less actually accomplished.

I'll leave this topic with a couple balanced reflections on the Popov situation from two respected voices. The first being the frontline correspondent Aleks Kots:

Aleksandr Kots comments on the address to his soldier by Major General Popov:

The former commander of the 58th Army, now State Duma deputy Andrei Gurulev, has actually confirmed the resignation of the current commander of the 58th Army by publishing his audio message. Major General Ivan Popov was put out of command, according to him, for his tough stance on shortcomings in equipping the army entrusted to him with counter-battery warfare equipment and artillery reconnaissance stations. Which affects heavy casualties.

It is no secret that this is a point of pain not only for the legendary 58th. The enemy has a much better counter-battery because of the of American ANT-PQ stations. And this, in turn, puts an imprint on the capabilities of our artillery, which, without exaggeration, works in the most difficult conditions. I do not know the full background of the situation around Popov. From his subordinates I heard positive comments about him. Maybe he was put at [away for safekeeping] in the context of the president's words: "Those who show themselves properly in combat work should form the backbone of the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the near future and in the future."

If not, then we should think about a system of rewards for reports that correspond to reality. And about punishment for the opposite. You can, of course, now show counter-battery work of the 58th Army (like the boats on the Dnieper), but it will not solve the problem, if it is really acute (like recently with the boats).

And FighterBomber, who's an actual Russian military pilot:

Regarding the performance of the Commander of the 58th Army, I can say the following.

In short, it's fucked up.

And there are two sides to this fuck-up.

The first side is the very fact of this statement.

If a lieutenant had made such a statement, tomorrow he would have stormed Kiev alone.

Why? Because this is the army, son. (c).

It is hard for me to imagine that in 1942, on the radio or in a newspaper, let it be "Red Star" there would be a program or an editorial for soldiers who were dissatisfied with some decisions of Zhukov. Where they would undoubtedly talk about their love for the

common soldier, and how bad things are at the front. And that they would be forced to appeal personally to Comrade Stalin.

Believe me, every soldier and officer, yes, even every guard dog has a lot of topics, complaints and suggestions that they think it is necessary to bring personally and urgently to Stalin's attention. How are they worse?

I don't even doubt that half of this editorial will be taken up by each author's declaration of love for the common soldier, the Motherland and words about duty, loyalty and honor.

By the way. Somewhere I've heard all this quite recently already. And then I saw it. It's been a couple weeks, literally.

Can we do it again?

The second side is, of course, that all of the problems and grievances voiced, 90% of the time, actually exist.

And that half of the problems can be solved within a couple of days (sometimes one day) with available resources and methods, and most of the remaining problems can be solved a little later. It is solved, but not by those who first of all created these problems and secondly are directly responsible for their solution.

For some reason they either do nothing, or habitually do it only for a photo report, or for a very long time. And of course, as a result of such inaction, our fighters die.

It is clear that all the comments are now filled with bored CIPSO bots and our individual citizens who have long been cuckooed. It's a habit.

It's not very clear to me what one can do looking at this mess.

Where today his Lordship can get this "clear sunshine" commander, who will not repeat the fate of his predecessor, and why should he suddenly be better than the existing one?

Because the whole system for the last few years has been sharpened to ensure that the clear suns were strangled at the root still platoon.

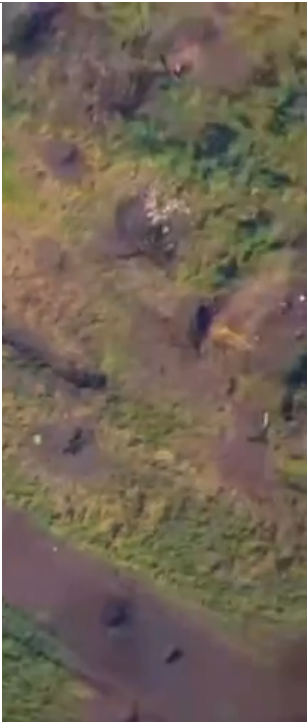
And only heel-clicking performers were given new command positions.

And also, Dugin, who believes that these bumps in the road mark a sort of growing pains of Russia purifying itself from all the latent, festering corruptions of the post-Soviet era, to be reborn anew:

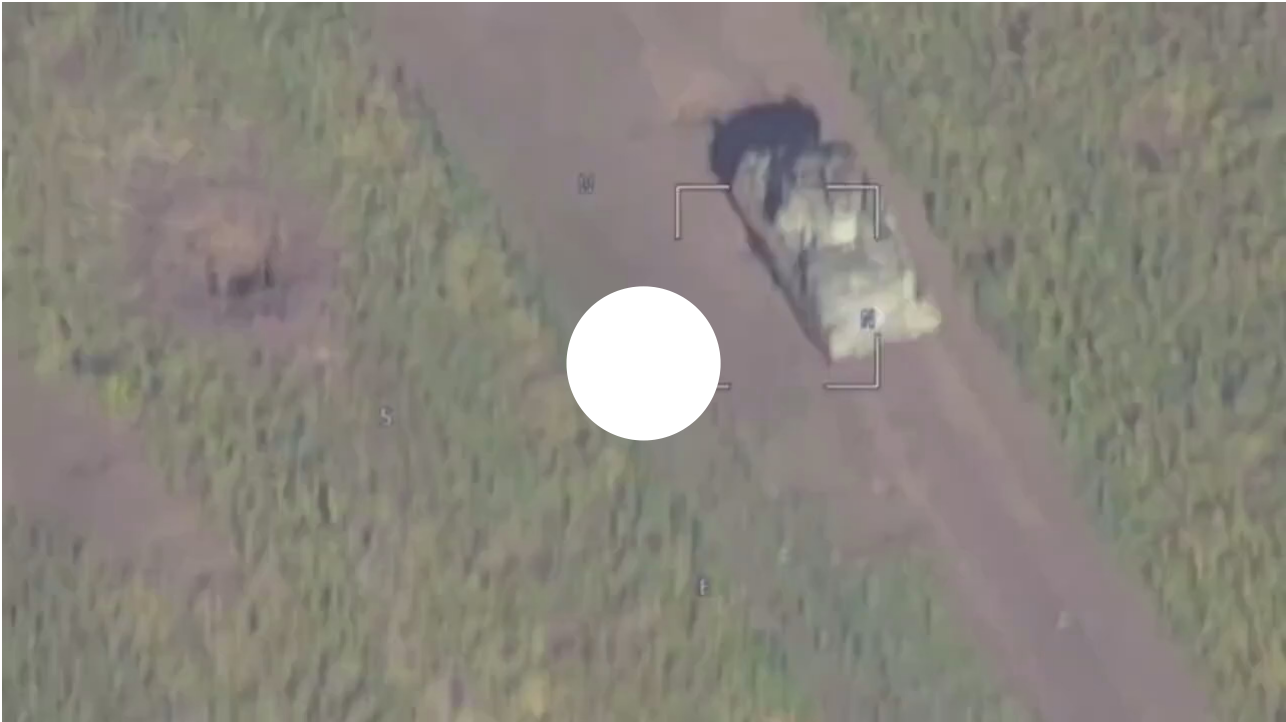


Completely oblivious to any false reports of Russia's demise, the frontline these past few days has actually seen ungodly levels of destruction for the AFU. Let's recount the ways by which Shoigu and Gerasimov's army is completely incapacitating the enemy:

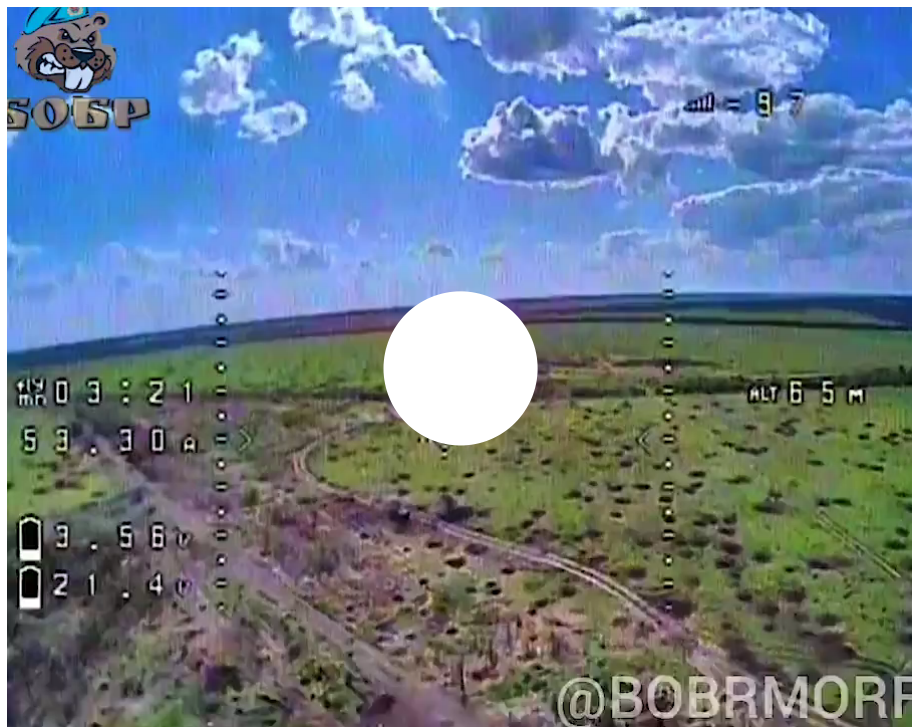








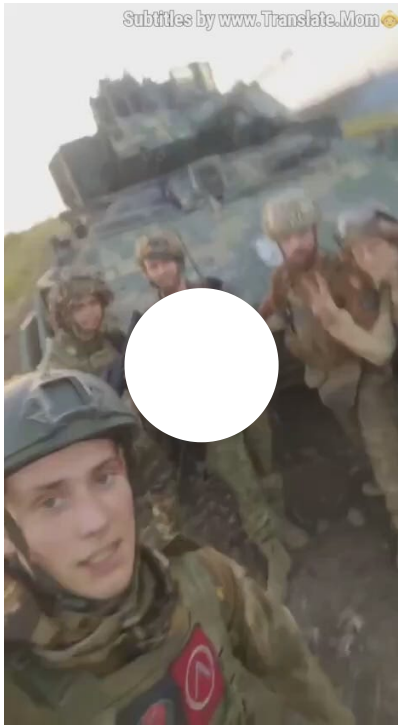
M2A2 Bradley hit:



Then there's an entire group surrendering by radio:



And Russian troops capturing the M2 Bradleys fully intact:





Followed by the Russian Duma initiating a motion that the captured Western tech will be displayed in front of the appropriate Western embassies in Moscow:



And for the adventurous, here are the more grisly ones, showing AFU destruction in grisly detail:

[Video 1](#)[Video 2](#)[Video 3](#)

Shoigu even reported on all the losses of the last few days, giving exact figures:



In fact, the last few days the AFU has launched renewed assaults on Pyatikhatki (west of Orekhov), Robotne (south of Orekhov), and the Vremeske ledge near Velyka Novosilka. These were rebuffed in particularly brutal fashion by the Russian forces yielding a trove of new videos showing endless devastation and mass death for the AFU, including dozens of new captured POWs. It seemed that Zelensky was really trying to make a final dent during the NATO summit as a sort of saving grace capstone, but he failed hard once again.

They did make a slight ingress near Bakhmut, where I've mentioned they've been pouring untold resources in a desperate bid to catch Russian reservists and weaker units napping. Near Berkhovka in the northwest they gained a slight wedge into Russian territory:

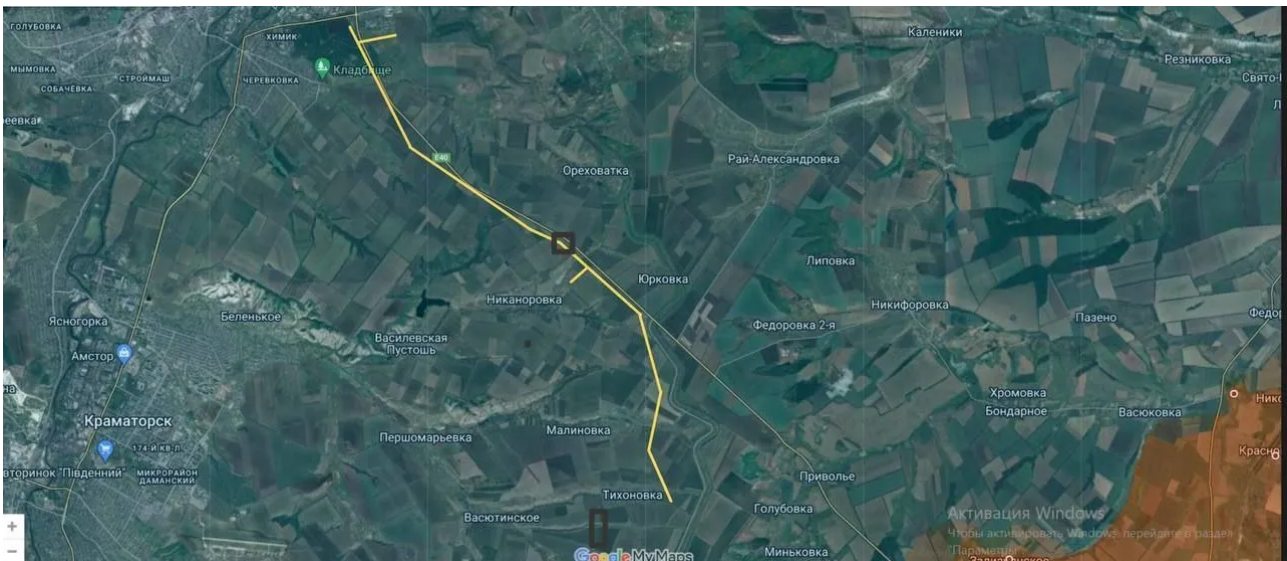


But it's important to remember that in this zone all such ingresses have thus far been very temporary, as Russian units briefly retreat to put over-eager AFU into a firebag. After pounding them with artillery for a few days the AFU often retreats and Russia moves back in as happened in Klescheevka a bit further south.

In Klescheevka they were repulsed with large losses and Russia even retook the most important heights on the outskirts of the settlement which the AFU had temporarily occupied:



In fact, satellite photos have shown that Ukraine has begun constructing a major series of trenches just to the east of Kramatorsk, shown below:



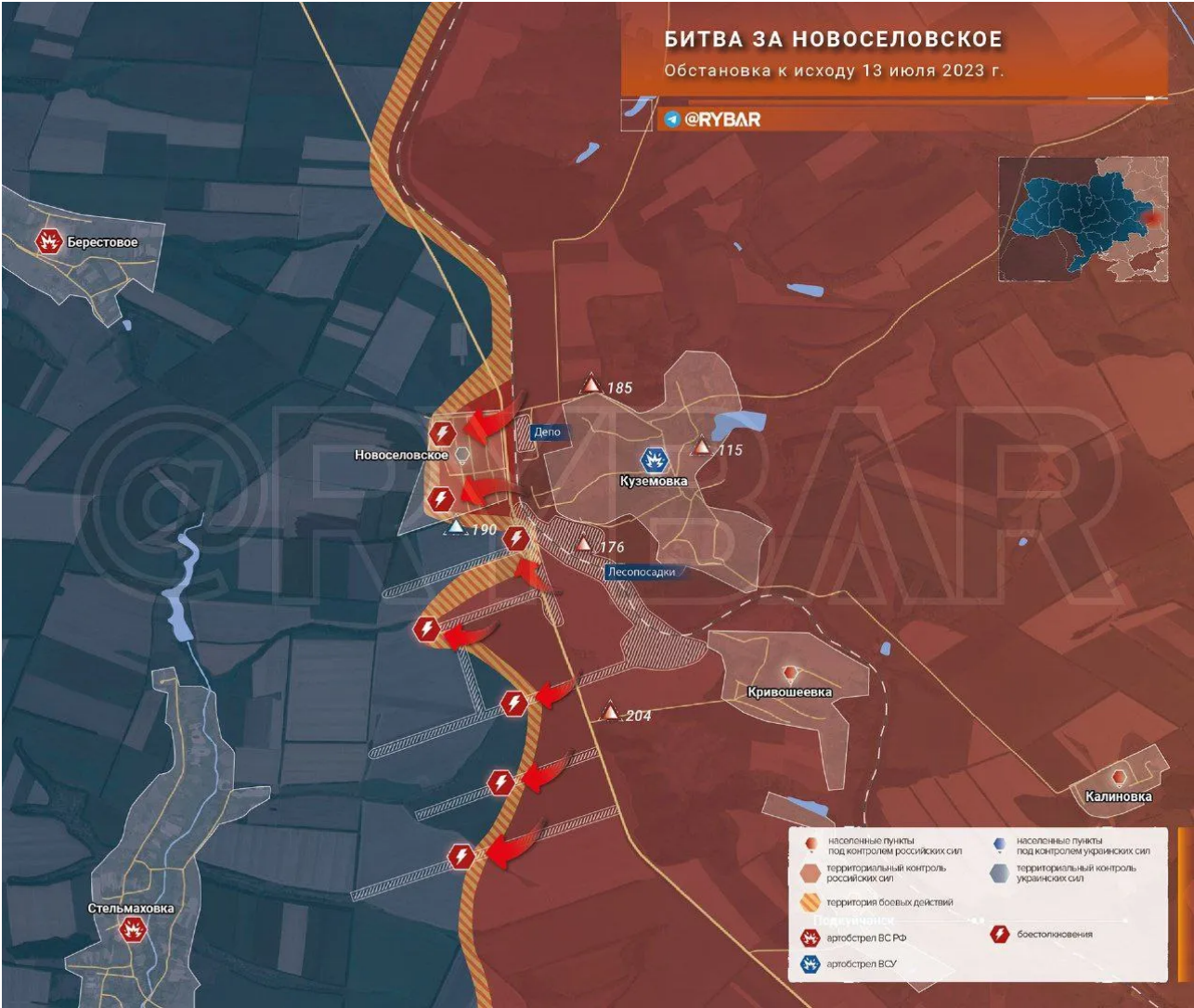
Apparently, they're now growing worried of a Russian offensive from the Bakhmut to sweep west towards the Kramatorsk-Slavyansk agglomerate.

Russia also made some new progress near Marinka, taking a few more fields south of it. And the biggest surprise of all was that just nearby, Russia reactivated the Huliaipole front, making a sudden advance from Marfopil to capture a couple kilometers of fields northward:



In fact, some reports claim the AFU retreated from the entire southern banks of the Yanchur River that runs through the fields there, making the grayzone upwards of 5km in width.

But it's in the north where Russia continues to have its biggest success. Elite Kraken units were said to have completely abandoned Novoselovske, near Kuzemovka, which is between Svatove and Kupyansk:



Here's Suriyakmap's take on it:



Reportedly, Novoselovske may now be in the gray zone and Russian troops will likely soon enter it. And southwest of there on the Kremennaya line, Russian forces have now captured all the way up to the important town of Torske, which they are now possibly entering the outskirts of:



One important thing to note is that if you'll recall, Ukraine was said to be launching a much vaunted offensive on the Kremennaya region during the winter and early spring. Pro-Ukrainian accounts were flush with predictions of Russia's complete collapse and the subsequent overrunning of Lugansk in its entirety. Now, once again that's been swept under the rug and it's Russia that has all the initiative with the AFU on the run.

This is also likely the reason AFU has begun digging those trenches near Kramatorsk. As I've outlined in previous reports, the full-scale siege of the Slavyansk agglomerate likely can't take place until the northern army group from the Kremennaya-Kharkov region moves into position to smother Slavyansk from the north as they were once getting ready to do long ago when Russia still held the Izyum region and Oskil River region.

But now you can see they're beginning to press up on Torske again, which is not far away from Lyman, which itself is the gateway towards Slavyansk-Oskil-Izyum.

Meanwhile, the situation is now dire for the AFU. Reports indicate that they've already begun firing the cluster munitions, which means the deliveries must have now taken place. Ukrainian general Oleksandr Tarnavskyi reportedly stated the munitions are already in Ukraine:

*USUARU Cluster munitions are already in Ukraine - Alexander Tarnavsky, commander of the *Tavria operational-strategic grouping of troops.*

"We just got them, haven't used them yet, but they can make a big difference (on the battlefield)."

According to him, the top military leadership will determine the areas where this ammunition can be used, noting that "this is a very powerful weapon."

57 min ago

Ukrainian general confirms to CNN that Kyiv has received cluster munitions from the US

From CNN's Alex Marquardt, Sebastian Shukla and Daria Tarasova in Dnipro



And Vostok commander Khodakovsky claims they're already being used:

RU  UA The enemy has started using cluster munitions on the front, - Khodakovskiy

Deputy Chief of the Russian National Guard in the Donetsk People's Republic on the situation on the Southern Donetsk section of the front:

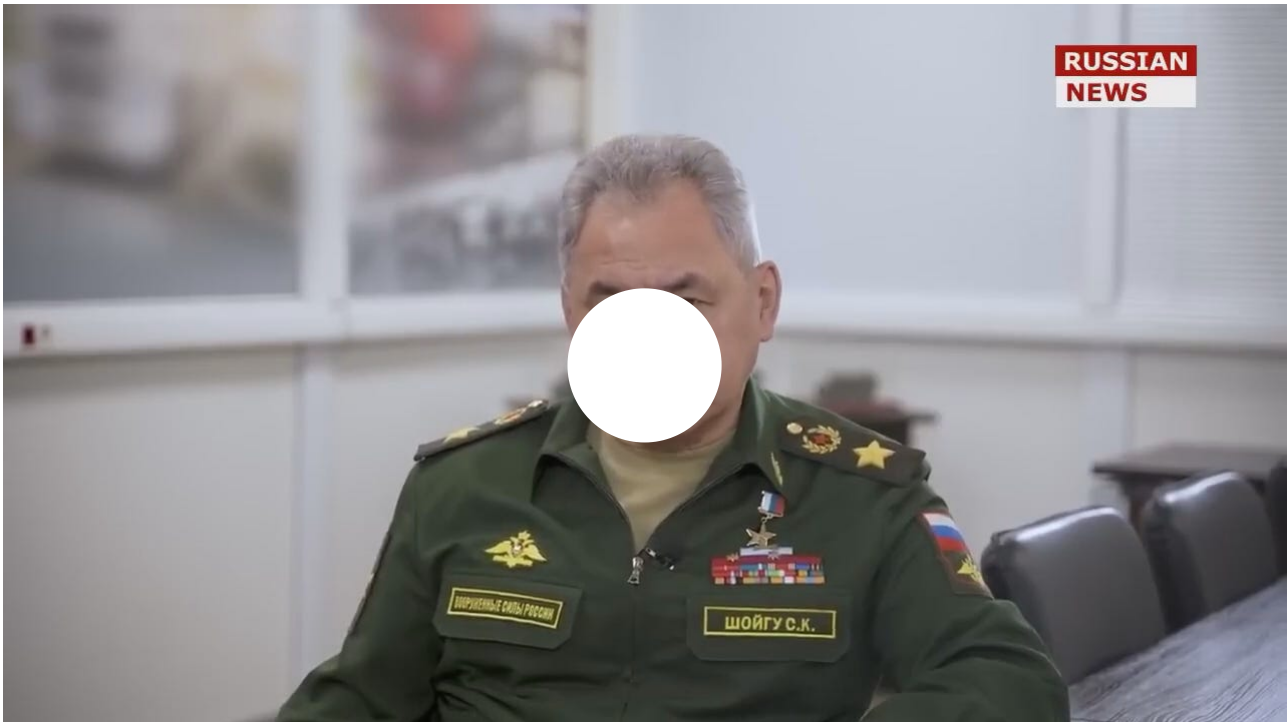
→ *"Reports from the positions indicate that cluster munitions have been used against us. Three times. Since our personnel are in shelters, no damage has been inflicted, but the situation is indicative: the previous day, there was a noticeable decrease in artillery activity, presumably due to a shortage of conventional ammunition, and now cluster munitions have arrived (either newly acquired or in reserve)."*

→ *"In 2014, we encountered cluster munitions for the first time in the Peski area. Positioning ourselves in any wooded areas greatly helped us back then: the tree canopies absorbed a significant portion of the projectiles. Overall, this type of ammunition poses a particular danger to vehicles and personnel outside of shelters, as well as to non-combatants due to the high dispersion of the low-precision weapon."*

One must recall that clusters have unique advantages but also unique disadvantages. Typical wooden trench covers can be easily destroyed by regular 155mm high explosive shells. But small bomblets can't do anything to them, they're simply too dispersed and not powerful enough. So if you're in cover, cluster bombs are very weak and won't do much to you.

But if you're out in the open, then they can be a true menace because their area of dispersal is much wider than a normal shell and they can inflict damage to a much larger concentration of troops. So they are not some wonder weapon and in fact, personally, if I had even a shred of cover I'd likely much prefer the enemy to shoot clusters at me than the powerful high explosive rounds. To dispel a myth: clusters aren't banned by some international conventions because they're "so powerful" or do so much damage. They're simply banned for the fact that many of the bomblets don't explode and are later picked up by children, to whom they resemble small toys.

On that note, Shoigu has now officially stated that Russia has many types of cluster munitions and will be 'forced to use them' if the U.S. hands over clusters to the AFU:



For all those interested, this is an incomplete list of aviation cluster bombs in service within the Russian Federation:

RBC-250-275 AO-1SCh

RBC-250-275 AO-2.5CH

RBC-250 ZAB-2.5

RBC-250

PTAB-2.5

RBC 250-170 MA-3

RBC-500 SPBE

RBC-500 BETAB-20

RBC-500 AO-2.5RT

RBC-500 AO-2.5RTM

RBS-100AO-25-30

RBS-100AO-25-33

BKF PTM-1

BKF PTM-3

BKF ODS-OD

BKF POM-2

BKF POM-1

BKF POM-SV

BKF PTAB-2.5

BKF AO-2.5RT

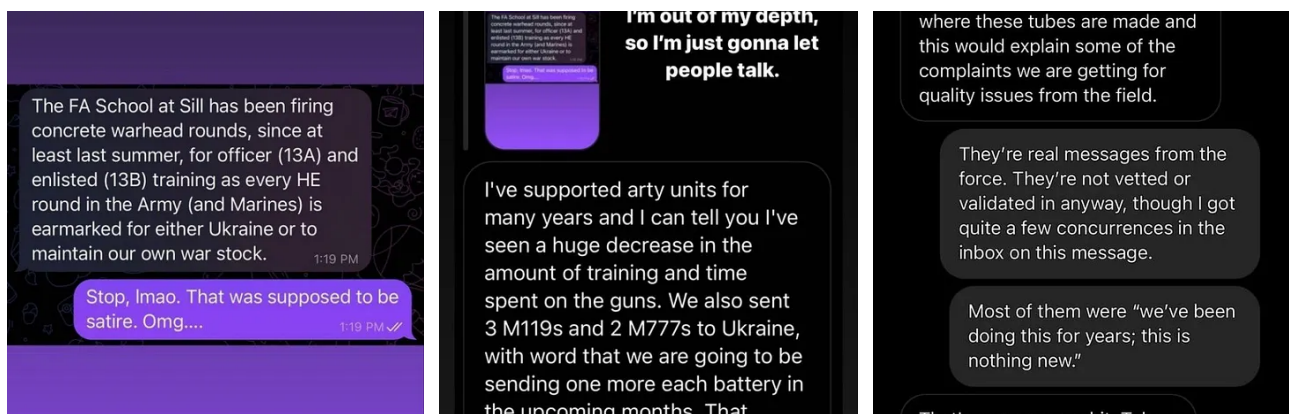
BKF AO-2.5RTM

BKF PTAB-1M

BKF AS

These are all ordinary bombs, but there are also guided ones, and these are only the types, not taking into account their quantities. There are of every type: cassettes, blocks and bundles in aviation.

And the other point is that the immediate usage of what is likely an inferior weapon suggests the ongoing ammo shortages for Ukraine. In fact, the U.S. itself is feeling the crunch more than ever, as a series of texts from a U.S. artillery officer revealed that the U.S. armed forces at Fort Sill don't even have any 155mm ammo to fire during training, and are firing concrete warhead rounds instead because all High Explosive ammo has been earmarked for Ukraine:



Not to mention that a series of new headlines really drives the point home about how dire the situation for the West currently is.

Five days of training for the latest AFU fodder:

OPINION
VIDEO

Artists, Plumbers, Bakers and Five Days to Make Them Soldiers

Video by Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein



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149

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Video by Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein

Mr. Tucker and Ms. Epperlein are documentary filmmakers whose
Despite all the lip service to the contrary, EU companies are unable to appreciably ramp up any ammo production:



<https://kyivindependent.com/investigation-eu-inability-to-ramp-up-production-behind-acute-ammunition-shortages-in-ukraine/>.

The above investigation finds that over a year and a half into the war, *“neither Ukraine nor the EU has implemented any solid plans for ammunition production ramp-up.”*

It goes on:

EU member states' governments hardly sign any long-term contracts with producers, while the "wait-and-see" arms industry is reluctant to take financial risks

Similarly, a new Wallstreet Journal piece raises the alarm:

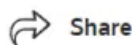
OPINION | REVIEW & OUTLOOK [Follow](#)

America Is Running Out of Ammo

Biden admits the problem, but then why not do something about it?

By [The Editorial Board](#) [Follow](#)

July 10, 2023 6:20 pm ET



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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/american-munitions-shortage-ukraine-joe-biden-pentagon-defense-military-congress-4e6d6576>

Meanwhile, rumor has it that Russia's largest tank producer, UVZ, is halting all secondary production and is going to focus entirely on tanks. A majority of their production has previously been civilian machines like train and trolley cars, so if this is true, it would open up massive new potentials for tank production.

Russia's UVZ halts all secondary output, begins tank mass production

By Boyko Nikolov on June 29, 2023

Subscribe to [Google News](#)

The decision of Russia's largest state-owned arms concern, Rostec, can be considered game-changing, even radical. Under the umbrella of this company is actually the military industry of the Russian Federation. In a press release to the public, Rostec announced that Uralvagonzavod [UVZ] is suspending any other activity that is part of the company's portfolio.



<https://bulgarianmilitary.com/amp/2023/06/29/russias-uvz-halts-all-secondary-output-begins-tank-mass-production/>

Furthermore, **a huge new leaked report** uncovers the mass-scale desertion and demoralization utterly decimating the AFU from the inside out.

Members of Ukraine's Law Enforcement Agencies that oppose the Kiev regime have leaked internal documents and reports that reveal a flood of cases of soldiers of the 2nd and 5th Mechanized Battalions deserting their posts with units being deemed to be combat ineffective.

Click the link above to view the ream of scanned documents showing Ukraine's units down to 20% levels of effectiveness, riven by demoralization. An example:

Major Usenov goes on to assess the "moral qualities and combat capability level" of the units as low as 20%. In the report, the causes are listed as "a low level of morale and

psychological state of the personnel, which significantly reduces the level of combat readiness..." and "a large number of sanitary and irreversible losses".

HOME > MILITARY & DEFENSE

Former Army Ranger who fought in Ukraine says conflict there is far worse than fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq

Sinéad Baker Jul 4, 2023, 7:59 AM EDT



<https://www.businessinsider.com/former-army-ranger-ukraine-fighting-far-worse-than-afghanistan-iraq-2023-7>

This follows the deputy commander of Ukraine's most elite 47th brigade, **Valery Markus**, one of the recent stars of the Zaporozhye show, yesterday issuing his note of resignation:



Valery Markus
@Valerii Markus



I strongly disagree with the application and development decisions 47 brigades. Build a military unit according to the values that we have we declared it at the beginning of its creation, but we were not allowed to. Influence on I can't fix the situation or fix it anymore. My stay as the chief sergeant of the brigade, I no longer consider it appropriate.

I can't leave my people, so I'm going to the lowest position for To be closer to them on the battlefield.

Kamandir's report is already on his desk.

Semper Audentes!

Valery Markus, chief sergeant of the 47th brigade of the Ukraine, announced his resignation to a lower position due to disagreement with the command staff.

"I strongly disagree with the decisions on the use and development of the 47th brigade," he clarifies. Also in his report, he declares that there are no punishments for the

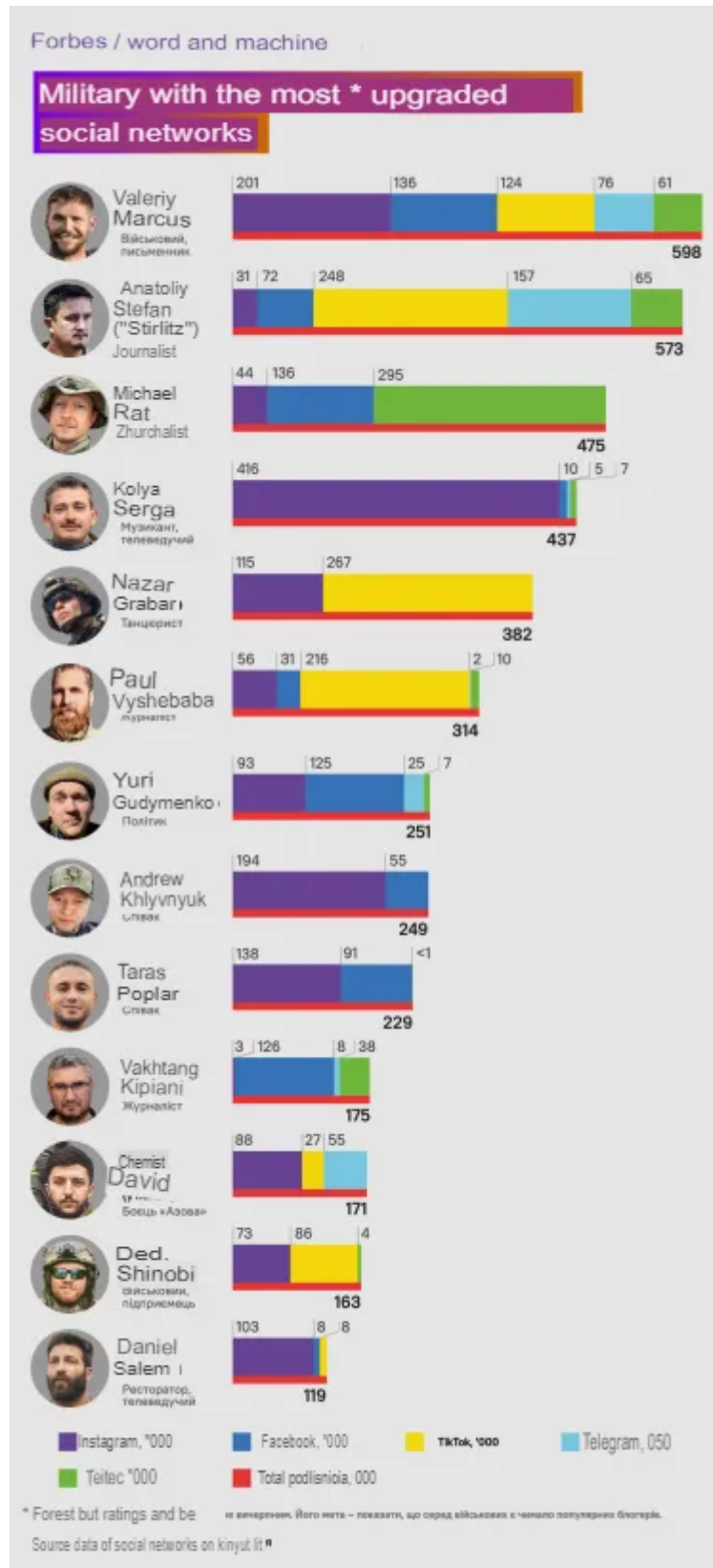
incompetence of the higher officer corps of the brigade, and calls Major Ivan Shalamaga an immoral degenerate.

Recall that it was the 47th brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine that became the star of commercials with columns of burning Western armored vehicles, and their Bradleys are collecting minefields and anti-tank missiles in the Zaporozhye direction, where they are now trying to attack.

It's funny that back in June, Markus himself cheerfully announced the success of the counteroffensive and some deep breakthroughs in the defense, however, as you can see, something went wrong and one of the most publicized brigades of the Armed Forces of Ukraine lost its chief sergeant.

This guy was one of the very top stars of the AFU, having given **many interviews** to top Western publications, done photo shoots with Zelensky and Zaluzhny, and was even rated as having the largest social media following of any figure in the Ukrainian armed forces:





Thus, his public resignation is a major sign of morale depletion in the AFU.

So next time someone brings up General Popov's untimely dismissal in drumming up the issue of morale, remind them that the AFU is in far worse shape. Not to speak of the terrible state that Western militaries are in, in general. Last I checked, Russian

Marines weren't sex trafficking handicapped fourteen year olds in their bases like the USMC:

US

Marine In Custody After Missing Underage Girl Found In Camp Pendleton Barracks

<https://dailycaller.com/2023/07/09/marine-arrested-camp-pendleton-barracks-child-sex-trafficking-allegations/>

Los
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Times

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A girl was found at Camp Pendleton weeks after she had been reported missing, according to her family, who alleges she was raped by a Marine on the military base north of San Diego



latimes.com

Girl found in Camp Pendleton barracks was raped by Marine, family alle



Talk about the moral depravity and degradation of a nation...

Not to mention:



Nearly 40% of US attack submarines in or awaiting repair as shipyards face worker shortages, supply chain issues

By Oren Liebermann, CNN

Published 6:27 PM EDT, Wed July 12, 2023



US Navy/Handout/Reuters

The Virginia-class USS North Dakota submarine is seen

during bravo sea trials in this U.S. Navy handout picture taken in the Atlantic Ocean August 18, 2013.

The only other thing to report is that the NATO Vilnius summit finally came and went:



And it ended with little fanfare as Ukraine got exactly what we all expected, which was pretty much nothing more than empty promises and more of the same status quo.



Dmitry Medvedev ✓
@MedvedevRussiaE

Читать



The NATO-Ukraine Council has been created.

By way of reminder, in 2002 the NATO-Russia Council was established. How it all ended is well known. Now the Alliance and our country are on (or rather, beyond) the brink of war.

This time, it's going to end differently. The Council will cease to exist because one of the parties will disappear.

The only semi-tangible reward for Zelensky's servile mooching was a promise from Macron for the delivery of French 'long range' Scalp missiles. These are basically France's version of the Storm Shadow, and are virtually identical—so it adds no real new capability but simply increases Ukraine's stock of the missiles.

Robert Fox

The Vilnius summit was disastrous if we want Ukraine to win its war



Now that all the looming specters—like the Air Defender exercises, ZNPP plant falseflag, and NATO summit—we anxiously anticipated have come and gone, the last remaining significant thing to watch for from this point on will be Polish-Lithuanian build up. The reason is, now that there remains no tangible saving grace for Ukraine on the horizon, some ‘deus ex machina’-style divine intervention they had hoped to save them, like an improbable overnight admission to NATO and subsequent Article 5 activation, there is very little left to stop Russia from completely dismantling them over the course of the remainder of this year.

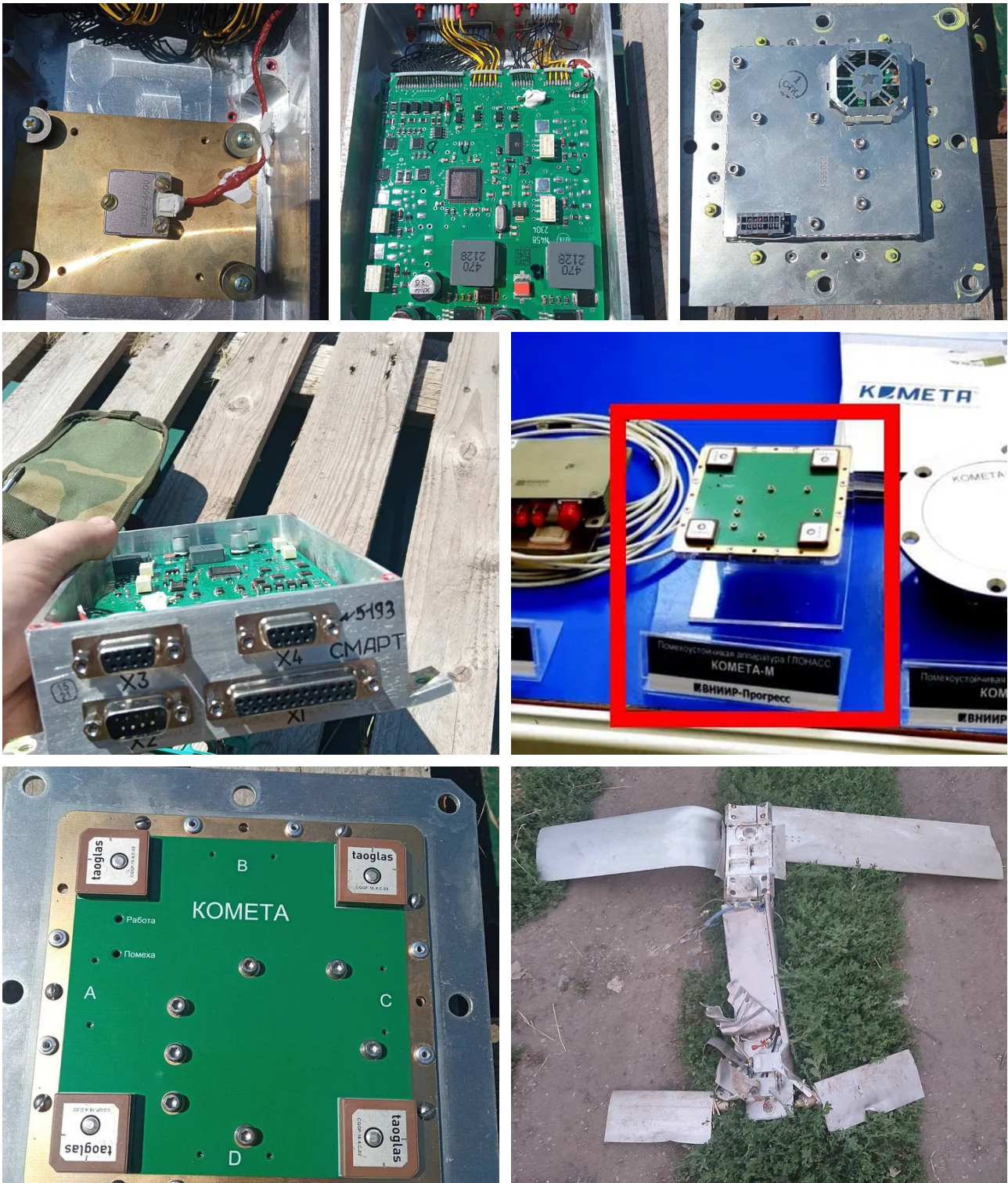
So, logically, the only wild card that really remains is potential Polish action of some sort. NATO has now made their decision that Ukraine will not be admitted, nor are “wunderwaffe” like F-16s anywhere on the horizon anytime soon. Poland is the only spoiling agent that can try some trick. This report, for instance, of Polish brigade commanders witnessed in Kiev is not unbelievable in light of things:

Polish brigade commanders have already been seen in Kiev, they are undergoing training at the headquarters, in the control points of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and are gaining experience. The Poles will sooner or later enter Ukraine, and after that Belarus will be drawn into the war with the Wagner PMC. In general, the whole war will continue as long as the West makes money from it.

Of course, the ZNPP situation can still flare up at any time as well, and Poland is intrinsically linked to that potential falseflag as it could be their troops to enter first in some staged ‘peacekeeping intervention’ should some nuclear incident occur. But for now, there remains nothing but the abyss staring back for Ukraine.

The attrition rate currently being suffered cannot hold out for much longer, so they'll soon have no choice but to turtle up, at which point—barring any extenuating circumstances—I foresee a fecund period for the Russian armed forces advancing on nearly every front as they're doing now. But let's see how things develop.

As a last few items and updates, let's begin with the fact that an intact photo of Russia's UMPC planning glide-bomb has been published:



You can see the actual winged 'Orthodox JDAM' module on the bottom right. Most interesting was the revelation in the circuitry that they're more advanced than meets the eye, as the bombs are outfitted with EW jamming protection:

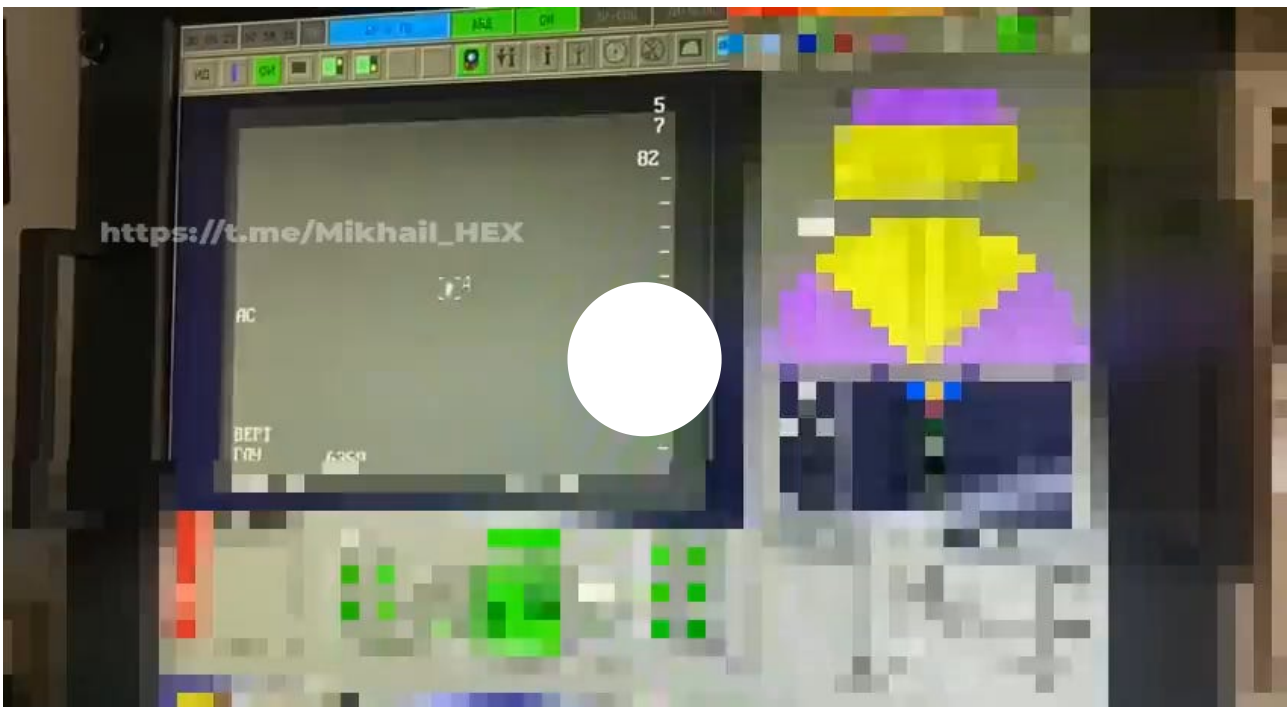
The UMPC modules for FAB-500M62 aerial bombs are fitted with small-size Kometa-M jamming receivers to protect the product from the effects of enemy EW jamming.

This is evidenced by the photos of the enemy, in whose hands a relatively complete planning and correction module fell into their hands.

This "Kometa" is not the cheapest, but it allows the UMPC not to be significantly affected by the enemy's EW, thus not reducing the accuracy of the hit.

Next:

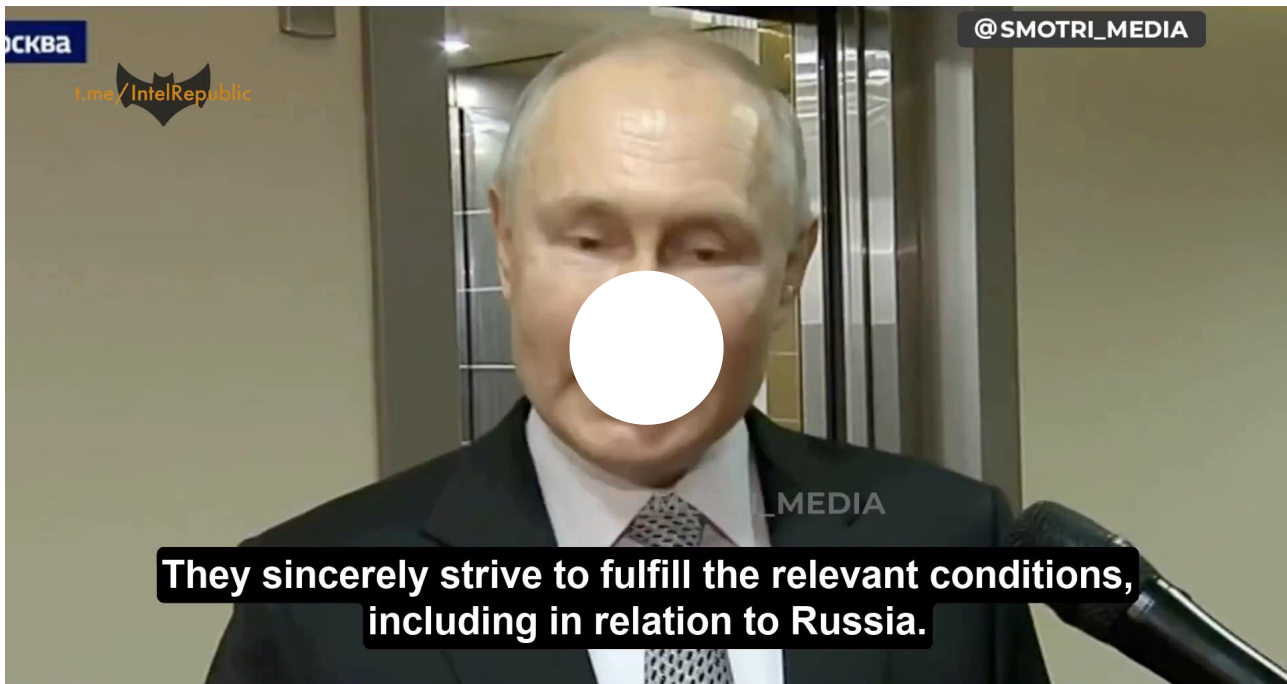
You'll recall [my exposé](#) on the Russian Pantsir shoot downs of the Storm Shadow missiles. Now, a new video has released claiming to show another Pantsir S1 shoot-down of a Storm Shadow:



This one isn't as clear, and we don't have some of the figures like last time, as they're blurred out. However, if you play it frame by frame near the moment of impact, you can just about make out what appears like the missile's wings. Only thing I'll note is that this type of front and center vector is quite favorable for the AD systems, so that

explains the ease of the shot, as it's pretty much the ideal vector overflying the AD unit directly rather than at a long transverse trajectory.

One big issue that remains is that of the grain deal. Putin has issued a statement that Russia has been fooled too many times on it and will now wait for the other parties to fulfill their obligations *first*. If they do so, Putin said he will immediately reinstate the grain deal, but as of now it's off. Keep in mind July 17 is the final date of expiration.



And by the way, what conditions is Putin talking about? As I understand, one of the most important agreements was for NATO to leash and muzzle their Ukrainian pet as regards strikes on Crimean facilities.

But most interesting to this is the fact that Russian air strikes on Snake Island were suddenly reported yesterday. And this is followed by the rumor that should the grain deal finally expire, Russia will retake the island. If you'll recall the famous 'goodwill gesture' consisted of Russia vacating the island in order to open up the grain deal.

I don't think they'll retake it, as it's impossible to hold it against Ukrainian strikes from the coast. However, adding to the alleged strikes on the island, Russia is reportedly now planning to lock down this entire region, of which Snake Island is a part:



The report goes as follows:

RU Russian air group equipped with Su-30SM, Su-34 and Su-35S multi-role combat aircraft, including strike-reconnaissance UAV Inokhodets + A-50U radar observation, reporting and guidance aircraft, activated its operations in the northern zone of the Black Sea, practically to the city RO of Constanta (Romania).

✕ *After a long time, an attack was carried out on Snake Island. Ukrainian info-resources also informed the public about these attacks.*

It's hard to know if this is just grandstanding on Russia's behalf to put pressure on the grain deal, or whether they are truly serious about taking control of the entire sea corridor leading to Odessa's ports in the brute force manner described above. This will be one of the key developments to watch over the course of the next week.

And speaking of Putin, [this RT article](#) describes how he met with all the Wagner commanders and Prigozhin himself on June 29. According to Putin, he wanted to meet more with the commanders who had fought honorably, rather than Prigozhin "who was merely there".

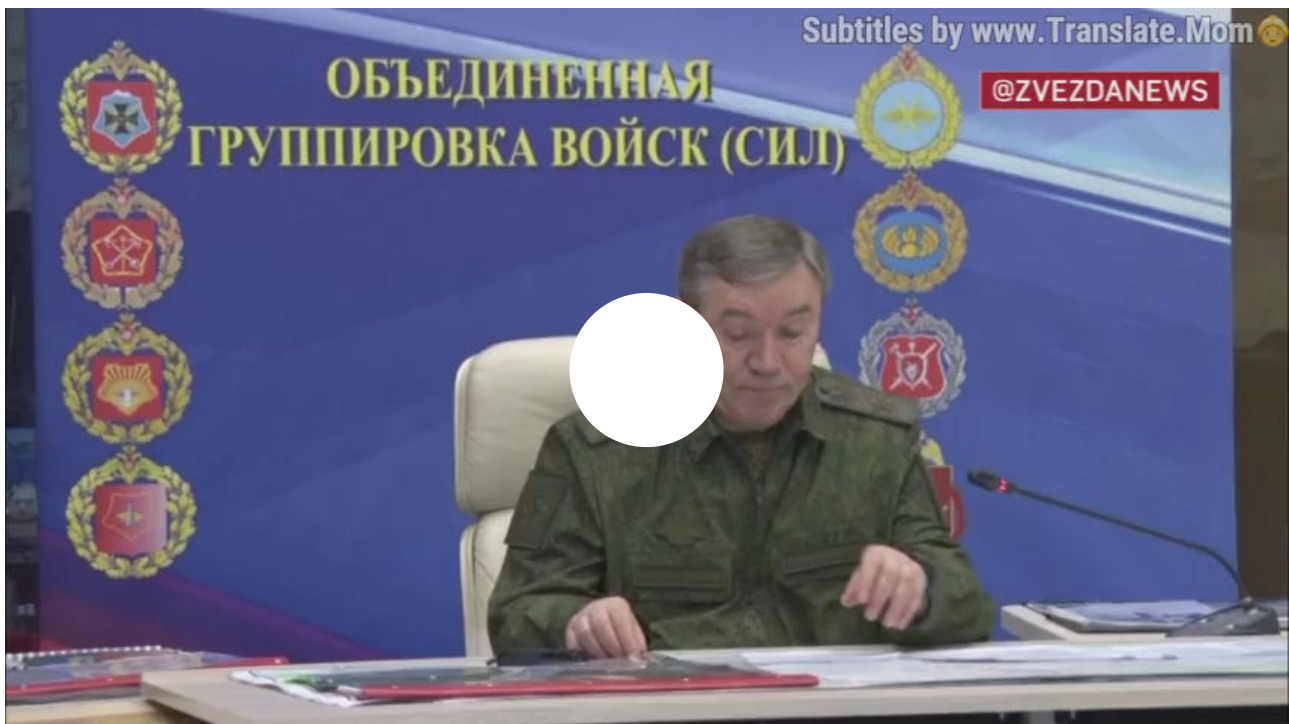
Putin says he praised them and laid out the options for how they could continue fighting for Russia. He states that Wagner "legally" doesn't exist in Russia, but that this is an issue for the Duma legislators to decide, on how to proceed with legitimizing PMCs properly within the context of Russian law.

One interesting tidbit was the following:

At one point, Putin said, he offered the men gathered at the Kremlin to continue their military service under the same commander they had served for the past 16 months, known by his call sign 'Grayhair'. While many of them nodded, Prigozhin spoke up on their behalf and said they did not agree.

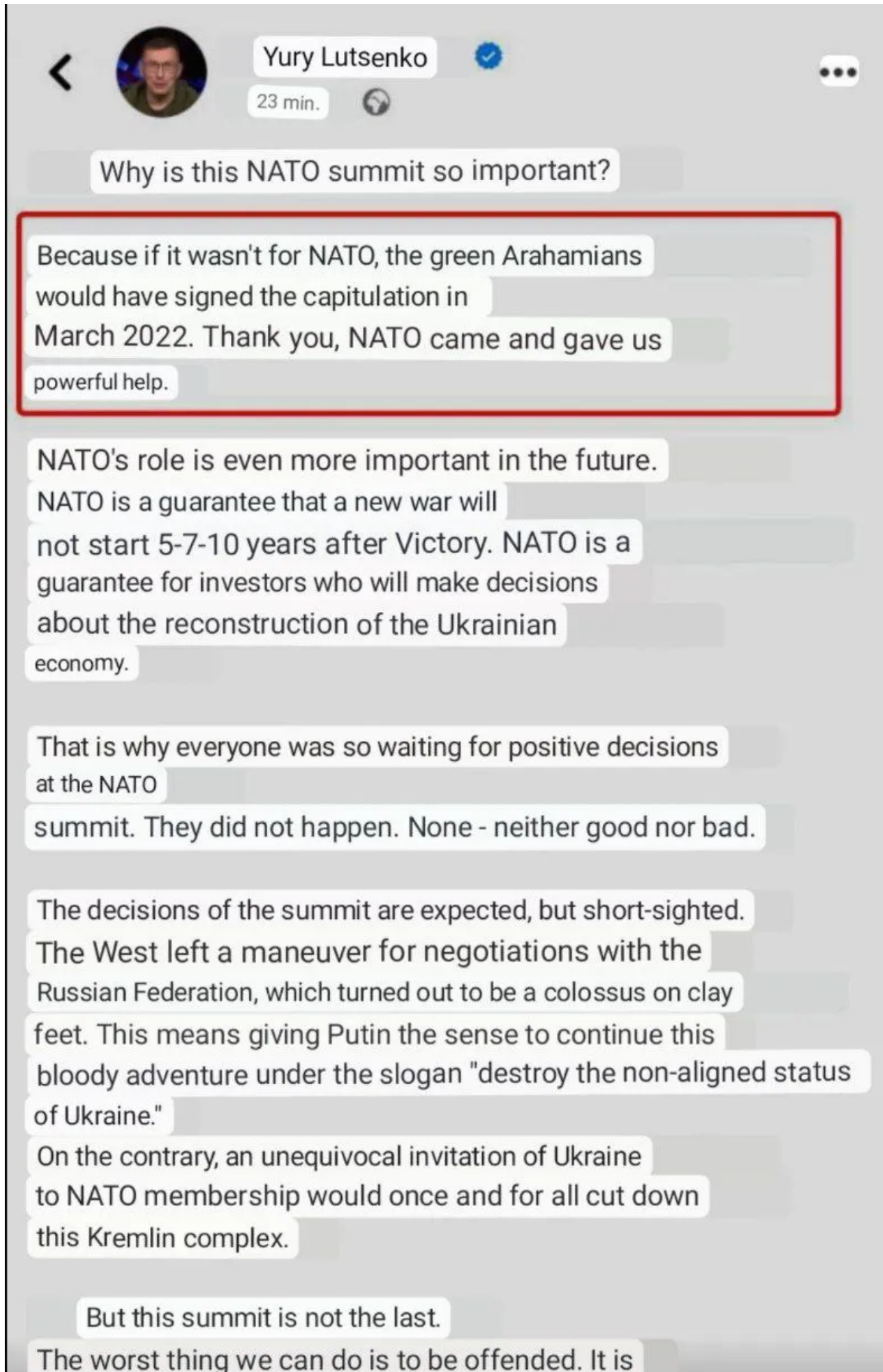
It appears much of the Wagner story is still up in the air, and has yet to fully conclude or be resolved, despite the fact that Prigozhin appeared to issue a new statement yesterday that they will be back on August 5th to continue fighting as planned.

By the way, Gerasimov too appeared recently at the helm of a command meeting, silencing the last few conspiracists who believed him to have been 'missing' in some way:



Next:

An interesting admission from Ukrainian ex-Interior Minister Lutsenko who openly admitted that if it weren't for NATO intervention, Ukraine would have surrendered in March 2022:

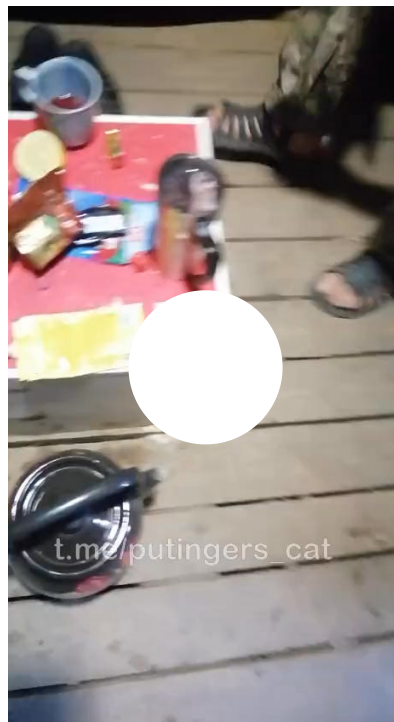


profitable only for the Russian Federation.

The Arahamians he refers to is the Ukrainian politician and leader of Zelensky's 'Servant of the People' faction, who was one of Zelensky's closest inner circle members and chosen to represent Ukraine in the negotiations in March-April of 2022.

The reason this revelation is interesting is that, with Putin's own recent revelation of the signed document from that period, the narrative from the pro-Ukrainian side was that it was Russia which appeared ready to capitulate in the sense of signing peace talks after ostensibly 'failing' in their bid to take Kiev. But here, Lutsenko dispels the myth and clearly notes that it was in fact Ukraine that was about to surrender were it not for NATO's sudden mass Lend Lease authorizations, which came at that time. One must recall, as I've previously reported, that the much-touted HIMARs package, amongst many other things, was announced right at this time as a lure to get Ukraine to kill the peace talks.

Finally, and speaking of HIMARs and all the other failed wunderwaffe, I leave you with this exuberant Russian soldier's speech which strikes quite a few chords of truth:



*If you enjoyed the read, I would greatly appreciate if you subscribed to a **monthly/yearly pledge** to support my work, so that I may continue providing you with detailed, incisive reports like this one.*

Alternatively, you can tip here: [Tip Jar](#)



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59 Comments



Write a comment...



Gareth 8 hr ago

With knowing anyone of the backstop of the command structure of the 58th or detailed recent combat history I stil feel confident making the following statement. The fact that half drunk civilians in Canada (that's me) are discussing thus situation on the comment section of substack (no disrespectful to simplicius I highly respect your analysis and im looking forward to your next post) is definitely not a good situation for the Russian military. Seriously the Russian MOD and General staff needs to kept this kind of shit in house and off social media ffs.

♡ LIKE (7) 💬 REPLY ...

6 replies



Mike Hampton Writes SSDG: Same Shit, Different Gove... 8 hr ago · edited 7 hr ago

"Over-advertised junk" is what that soldier in the last video said. Applies to American ego too. I'm sick of their politics and the world getting infected. No mask stops the smell of neocon bullshit.

Most media seems to have missed French General Michel Yakovleff's revealing ranting about NATO and Ukraine on France24 earlier this week. He was in a "debate" with other NATO loyalists and a minor politician. I posted the transcript at

<https://mikehampton.substack.com/p/ukraine-will-be-a-problem-member>

Regards "ungodly levels of destruction for the AFU", there was another sign of the Media facing truth. It happened on the Wall Street Journal. Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt (Ret.) first lied that Bakhmut has flipped between Ukraine and Russia numerous times, I think to increase the possibility that Ukraine could split Russia's land bridge to Crimea. But that was carrot propaganda before the stick of Russian defence which, with props on table, he showed to be formidable, almost insurmountable. I've timed the video for that moment - <https://youtu.be/zMZ58anSFF4?t=287>

♡ LIKE (11) 💬 REPLY ...

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