

A wooden cross stands in a field of tall, thin grasses. The background is a cloudy sky with a mix of grey, white, and blue tones. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

An Independent Expert Report

PUTIN. WAR

BASED ON MATERIALS FROM BORIS NEVITSOV

Foreword

The assassination of Boris Nemtsov February 27, 2015 was both shocking and not shocking at the same time. To know that the life of someone whom you liked and respected so much was taken violently and suddenly was a shock. At the same time, knowing how the Putin regime has demonized Russian opposition figures and critics – describing them as part of a “fifth column”, or enemy of the state, seeking to overthrow the government and using nationwide television to blacken their reputations – it is no surprise that Boris paid the ultimate price. Indeed, the environment that Putin has created condones, if not encourages, violence against anyone bold enough to criticize the country’s leaders.

Few were more relentless and courageous than Boris in exposing abuses of the party in power. While we may never know who was behind his assassination, we do know that he persevered in reporting on the corruption and human rights violations of the Putin regime despite threats to his liberty and ultimately to his life. Some observers write off Boris, saying he had little impact on average Russians’ perceptions of Putin. But Boris was in pursuit of the truth, not a popularity contest, and he felt it his patriotic duty and responsibility to shine a light on the outrages of the Putin clique. Given the Kremlin’s control over the media, it is nearly impossible for critics to rise in the standings; if they were to do so, they would become the next target.

Speaking out even with low popular support makes Boris’s determination even more admirable. How many of us would regularly organize opposition rallies or issue scathing reports critical of the host regime and exposing its corruption when it seemed that not many in the country cared? Doing the right thing when the government relentlessly attacks you and the population seemingly ignores you takes a strong character that few of us have.

Boris’ report, “Winter Olympics in the Sub-Tropics: Corruption and Abuse in Sochi,” detailed allegations of rampant corruption in preparation for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

I had the privilege of appearing with Boris and several other brave Russians in a panel discussion on that report in May 2013 in Washington, DC. I participated knowing I lived in the safety of the United States; they were returning home to Russia, with an uncertain future ahead of them.

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Boris’ last project was one, tragically, that he did not live to see come to fruition. “Putin. War” compiles information and evidence on Putin’s war on and in Ukraine (which the Russian leader, of course, denies). It exposes the involvement of Russian forces in the fighting in Ukraine, tallies Russian casualties, calculates the economic and financial costs of the war for Russia, describes the atrocities committed by Russian-supported fighters, and reveals the role of forces sent by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. In other words, it unveils as total lies all of the Kremlin’s denials of involvement in Ukraine. It is not clear whether Boris’ plans to issue such a report played a role in his murder, but the possibility certainly cannot be ruled out.

Filling Boris’ shoes is no easy task, but those who saw it as their mission to finish what Boris had started knew exactly how best to remember him. I can think of no better tribute to everything Boris stood for than for his friends and supporters to pick up the pieces and pull together this report. I am confident Boris would be very proud. Doing so, however, brings with it risks for those involved. We in the West have an obligation to demonstrate solidarity with Russian democracy and human rights activists and politicians who understand the threat posed by Putin’s authoritarianism. Their statements and reports will stand the test of time, and the least we can do is stand with them.

David J. Kramer, senior director for human rights and democracy at the McCain Institute for International Leadership in Washington, DC



*«The task of the opposition now
is education and truth.
And the truth is that Putin
equals war and crisis.»*

Boris Nemtsov, Facebook post, January 31, 2015

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Adina Aadi ;h k:

The idea for this report belongs to Boris Nemtsov. One day, he strode into the RPR-PARNAS party headquarters and loudly announced: “I know what we have to do. We’ll write a report, called Putin.War, publish a bunch of copies and hand it out on the streets. We’ll tell how Putin unleashed this war. It’s the only way we can beat the propaganda.” Nemtsov triumphantly looked around at everyone, the way he always did when a good idea came to him. “What do you think, Shorina? Do you like it?” he asked, hugging Olga.

Starting in early 2015, Boris began collecting material for the report. He worked extensively with open sources, and found people who could share information. Nemtsov believed that only by attempting to stop the war could one display real patriotism. The war in Ukraine was a despicable and cynical crime for which our country was paying with the blood of our citizens, with an economic crisis and with international isolation. No one in Russia needed this war except for Putin and his entourage.

Boris did not live to write the text of this report. On February 27, 2015, he was murdered on the Bolshoi Moskvoretsky Bridge, directly outside the Kremlin walls. His colleagues, friends and others who considered this work important joined together to complete Nemtsov’s project. The materials that Boris had prepared formed the basis for this report. The table of contents, hand-written notes, and documentation – everything that he left behind was used in the preparation of this text.

Our task is to tell the truth about the Kremlin’s interference in Ukrainian politics which led to the war between our peoples. It led to a war that must be immediately stopped.

Photo by Denis Sinyakov





Chapter 1

Why Putin Needs This War



Starting in the autumn of 2011, Vladimir Putin's popularity rating began to fall noticeably. On the eve of the 2012 presidential election, the likelihood emerged that he would not be able to win in the first round. Such a scenario created the risk of significantly weakening Putin's position and of undermining his legitimacy. Ruling the country in his customary authoritarian style as a "national leader" would become much more difficult.

The election campaign required a maximum mobilization of resources by the authorities in order to ensure their victory in the first round. However, the key conditions for Putin's victory were that no real contenders be allowed to take part in the elections, contenders who were seriously prepared to campaign for the presidential post, as well as the authorities' total administrative control over all important media. In the 2012 elections it proved impossible to avoid direct fraud, including stuffing the ballot box with false ballots, vote-rigging, re-writing of the records, and so-called "carousels" of voters [people who were bused from one district to another in order to vote more than once].

Upon his return to the presidency after the elections, Putin made a number of populist decisions in the hope of strengthening his popularity rating. Specifically, he signed the so-called "May decrees" of 2012, which a number of experts considered wasteful and economically unfounded.¹ However, even such populism couldn't reverse the trend: after the elections, Putin's ratings rapidly declined. Meanwhile, the "May decrees" were slow to be enforced, and a year later, Putin publicly criticized the government for ineffective spending on their implementation.²

By the summer of 2013, it became obvious that the traditional methods used to secure Putin's popularity in past years were not capable of increasing his popularity rating above 40-45%. By all appearances, the Kremlin was seriously concerned about the negative trend and began to work on a fundamentally new means of strengthening Putin's electoral position.

The scenario of "the return of Crimea as a part of Russia" was undoubtedly planned and carefully prepared in advance by Russian authorities. Today, the scale of this preparation is obvious. Even before the invasion of Crimea by Russian Special Forces, Ukrainian army generals and officers were recruited, together with directors and officers of law-enforcement, the intelligence services and the military, who at a key moment renounced their oaths and defected to the side of the Russian Federation. Local separatist politicians and media actively supported Russia's actions with financing from Moscow. Crimean business also displayed its loyalty, receiving favorable loans from Russian banks on non-market terms.

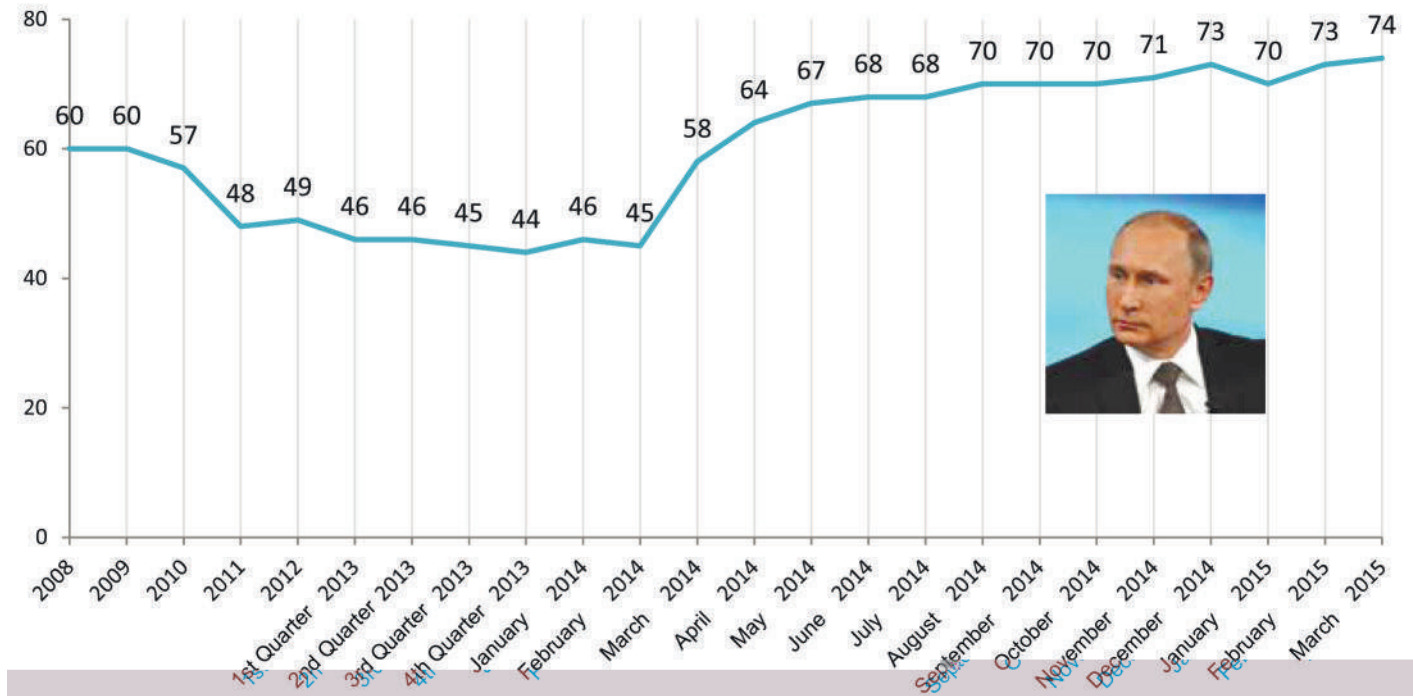
The Kremlin began to work on a fundamentally new means of strengthening Putin's electoral position.

Moreover, long-term efforts were deployed to weaken Ukraine's economy and political system as a whole. "Gas wars" were launched regularly, food embargoes were introduced and then lifted. There was overt pressure on Ukrainian authorities to force Ukraine to take part in all kinds of "integrationist" projects of the Kremlin that limited the sovereignty of the former Soviet republics.

The revolution in Kiev and President Viktor Yanukovich's flight from the country in early 2014 weakened the Ukrainian state for a time and created the ideal conditions for the Kremlin to take decisive measures for the separation of Crimea. With the support of Russian troops and intelligence services (which Putin himself publicly admitted a year later),³ a referendum was organized on the peninsula which then became the formal basis for its incorporation into the Russian Federation.

¹ The full list of sources see on page 63

Electoral Rating of Vladimir Putin Before and After the Start of the War in Ukraine



Survey by FOMnibus, 14-15 March 2015, 204 population centers in 64 regions of the Russian Federation, 3,000 respondents.

The annexation of Crimea to Russia with the active support of state propaganda enabled Putin to strengthen radically his own legitimacy. His popularity rating reached record levels.⁴

However, Putin didn't stop at Crimea; soon a full-fledged war had broken out in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces opposed the separatists, who were demanding the withdrawal from Ukraine of the territories under their control and their annexation to the Russian Federation following that of Crimea. As can be seen from the materials contained in this report, the Russian authorities provided active political, economic, personnel and even outright military support to the separatists. The reasons for which Putin effectively unleashed an armed conflict on the territory of a neighboring state enable us to suggest two possible interpretations of his actions.

The first interpretation is that the Crimean success convinced Putin of the readiness of the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine to become part of the Russian state. Essentially, it was a question of the "aggregation of the Russian lands," and such a task attracted Putin with its historical sweep, despite the possible costs. In order to justify Russia's claims to these lands, local separatists were activated, with support from militants and political strategists who came to the Donbass from Moscow and other Russian cities. In fact, such efforts ensured no more than a local result: except for some districts of Donetsk and Lugansk Regions. After several upheavals, the rest of the Russian-language regions confirmed their intention to remain part of Ukraine. The evolving situation motivated Putin to find a political way out of the crisis, despite Russia's obvious military superiority, and largely enabled the peace talks with the new Ukrainian government.

The second interpretation is that from the outset Putin realized that the idea of forming a state structure in the Donbass with the prospect of its annexation to the Russian Federation had far more supporters among citizens in Russia than in Ukraine. According to this logic, Russia provoked a military conflict with the purpose of creating a favorable negotiating position in the dialogue with Western countries. The ceasefire in the Donbass, which the Kremlin is capable of guaranteeing, could then become the basis for lifting the economic and political sanctions against Russia, which became inevitable following the annexation of Crimea. Furthermore, under this scenario, the question of the lawfulness of incorporating the peninsula into the Russian Federation is off the agenda, and while the Western countries do not formally recognize Crimea as Russian territory, they do so in fact.

A change in the political situation could end with Putin on trial before the International Criminal Court.

One way or another, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is far from over. Though he reaps clear political dividends inside the country, Putin at the same time continues to run significant risks.

First of all, the Russian government is forced to continue its support of the separatists in the Donbass, despite the growing political and economic costs. A refusal of such support might be perceived as a betrayal of Putin's current supporters (including those who gained combat experience in the east of Ukraine) and could provoke a wave of sharp dissatisfaction with the president inside Russia.

Secondly, continued confrontation with the West, isolation and sanctions are capable of causing significant damage to the Russian economy. This creates risks of social protests that could once again undermine the Russian president's ratings.

Finally, a weakening of Putin's position on the world stage and an escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will create a real threat of criminal prosecution for the current president of Russia. A change in the global political situation could quite possibly end with Putin on trial at the International Criminal Court on an official charge of war crimes.



Photo by kremlin.ru

Chapter 2

Lies and Propaganda



Anyone attempting to describe the political career of Vladimir Putin will encounter an insoluble problem – the Russian president never had a political career. Putin's career is made for television, and all of its stages, from the threat that he would “rub out the Chechens in their outhouses” to President Yeltsin's admonition to him in handing over power that he “take care of Russia” – were no more than a series of TV shows.

Vladimir Putin is a TV star. His presidential calendar is scheduled from one call-in show to the next. The exaggerated role of television in communication between the government and society was formed in Russia under Boris Yeltsin, but it was Vladimir Putin who managed to create a telecentric state in which all public institutions from the church to the army have been replaced by their televised images. Illustrative in that regard is the scandal in the spring of 2015 in which RBC journalists discovered⁵ that the television shows of the latest working meetings of Vladimir Putin, shown on federal television channels, had in fact been taped long before they were aired on TV: Putin's true whereabouts during that time were simply unknown. It's likely that this practice began long before 2015, but no one paid any attention to it until now, and no one knows how many more pre-taped Putin videos are stored in the Kremlin's video library, waiting in the wings.

The number of mentions of the Ukrainian nationalist organization “Right Sector” in the Russian media at a certain point significantly exceeded mentions of Putin's United Russia party

Before the start of 2014, Russian propaganda seemed appalling to many people. It got to the point that some of the television shows⁶ about the opposition were yielding real criminal cases and arrests. However, after the start of the political confrontation in Kiev in late 2013, it became clear that the Russian propaganda which society had encountered until now had been relatively benign.

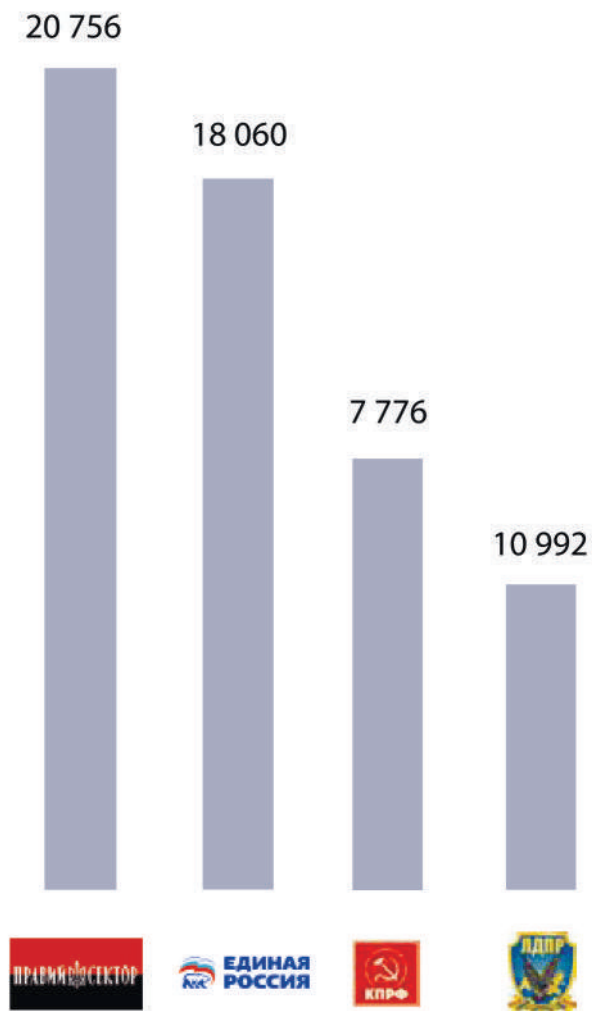
In fact, the propagandists themselves did not hide the fact that they did not work at full throttle during "peace time." For example, in 2011, Margarita Simonyan, the head of the state channel “Russia Today,” which is aimed at a Western audience, openly explained⁷ the raison d’etre of her TV station: "When there is no war, it seems as if it (RT) is not needed. But damn it, when there is a war, it's (RT is) downright critical. You can't create an army a week before the war starts."

For the Kremlin, the “War” began on Kiev's Maidan Square in the late autumn of 2013. In the portrayal by the official Russian media, the clash in the Ukrainian capital looked like this: descendants of World War II collaborators and radical nationalists joined together in favor of European integration (as only this was discussed), and they were practically ready to carry out ethnic cleansing. The number of mentions⁸ of the Ukrainian nationalist organization “Right Sector” in the Russian media at a certain point significantly exceeded mentions of Putin's United Russia party-- despite the fact that “Right Sector” garnered less than 2% of the votes cast in the Ukrainian elections.

After the departure of Viktor Yanukovich, Russian television channels began exclusively to refer to the new leaders of Ukraine as "the Kiev junta," and to label the military campaign against the separatists in the east of the country as -“punitive”.

It is worth noting that for many years, Russian propaganda devoted tremendous attention to the Great Patriotic War. Vladimir Putin made this topic a key one in his own ideological system. In 2005, state news agency RIA Novosti created a new tradition for the May 9th holiday – the mass wearing of St. George ribbons with the slogan "I remember, I'm proud."

*Number of mentions of political parties
and organizations in the Russian
media (May 2014)*



www.kashin.guru

The most humane Soviet holiday became the main national holiday of Putin's Russia, which at first seemed like quite a good thing. But this also turned out to be strictly utilitarian, when it came to the conflict with Ukraine.

The rhetoric of the war years was projected onto the current political situation. In the rhetoric of Kremlin propaganda, the Ukrainian government became the “Bandera-ite” [supporters of Stepan Bandera, leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists during WWII] and “Nazi” government, and, just as it had done from 1941 to 1945, Russia was once again fighting fascism.

The St. George ribbon turned from a symbol of memory to an attribute of the current resistance -- if you wore the ribbon, you were an advocate of the separation of Crimea and the Donbass from Ukraine, and an enemy to the “Bandera-ites.»

The anti-fascist rhetoric, exploited by the official media, translated a political crisis into the language of a war for annihilation.

A landmark episode of this war was Channel One's show about the “crucified boy”⁹. A woman was shown on the main news program of the main news channel claiming that in Slavyansk, from which the fighters of the separatist army had fled, the Ukrainian National Guard had crucified a six-year-old boy to a bulletin board. No confirmation was provided.¹⁰ What is more; it became known that the woman in question had never been to Slavyansk. Channel One was forced to apologize to viewers.¹¹

Slavyansk is also the city involved in the harassment campaign against Russian musician Andrei Makarevich, who visited the city after Ukrainian forces arrived there, and who gave a concert for local residents and refugees in a neighboring town. In the interpretation of Kremlin media, the audience turned into “punishers” and the concert was “a dirty anti-Russian escapade.” Government supporters referred to Makarevich as an “enemy of Russia” and demanded that he be stripped of his state awards.

The war in Ukraine also demonstrated the diversification of Russian propaganda, depending on the audience and the means of delivery of the information. Television is absolutely mainstream and the picture it provides should be as general and abstract as possible, without extraneous details. The consumer of television news is passive, so the producers try not to overload him with excessive details. Thus, for example, federal television channels provided a minimum of information about Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov), the commander of the Slavyansk separatists, who was already famous among Internet users.

Girkin, who took part in the annexation of Crimea, is not in the film “Crimea: Road to the Motherland”¹², in which Vladimir Putin first admits the use of the Russian army on the territory of the Ukrainian peninsula. However, Girkin subsequently became a hero of the tabloids and news radio stations¹³, that is of those media outlets whose audience strives to receive information from various sources rather than simply from the official media. Such an audience will not believe fake stories about a “crucified boy” and requires a more sophisticated approach. This is why the correspondents Semyon Pegov of LifeNews, and Dmitry Steshin and Aleksandr Kots of Komsomolskaya Pravda reported to their viewers and readers about what Russian television failed to cover. They have quite openly told the story about the “army depot”¹⁴ which supplies arms to the separatists, and about the conflicts among the leadership of the “People’s Republics.” The scene shown by LifeNews in which a separatist commander nicknamed Givi forces Ukrainian POWs to eat their chevrons¹⁵ would be too shocking for the program “Vremya.”

Of all the shows broadcast on federal channels, it is likely that only the program Vesti Nedeli (News of the Week) on Rossiya-1 could compete with the tabloids and online media for its openness.

Created on the model of American evening news shows, it played a key role in widening the bounds of what is considered acceptable in Russian broadcasting. Host Dmitry Kiselyev was appointed as head of the former RIA Novosti at the onset of the Ukrainian conflict and is waging his own personal war with Ukraine. It was Kiselyev who publicly announced the readiness of our country to turn the U.S. into “radioactive dust.”¹⁶ His colleague Vladimir Solovyov, the host of a similar show on the same channel, tries to pitch his rhetoric to the same level of “News of the Week,” but he traditionally lags behind Kiselyev, who has already been included in Russian sanctions’ lists. This can be explained: Solovyov has a home in Italy,¹⁷ so falling into the sanctions list is not in his plans, although the infamous “atmosphere of hatred” flourishes in his broadcasts on TV station Rossiya-1 and on Radio Mayak.

In fact, all broadcasting of Russian state media now takes place in an atmosphere of total hatred without any quotation marks. When this all ends, it will take Russia a long time to come to its senses, and to rid itself of the ethical and behavioral standards of the propaganda of 2014-2015.

Russian state media now broadcast in an atmosphere of total hatred without quotation marks

Vladimir Putin awards the “Order of Honor” award to the television host Vladimir Solovyov in the Kremlin.



Chapter 3

How They Took Back Crimea



*On March 4th, 2014, during a meeting with journalists, Vladimir Putin was asked by a Bloomberg correspondent about the identity of the people in the military uniforms that looked like Russian uniforms who were blocking the Ukrainian military bases in the Crimea. Putin replied: "These were local self-defense forces." And he explained where they might get a Russian army uniform: "Look at the post-Soviet space. There are lots of uniforms that are alike...Go into a store here in our country, and you can buy any uniform."*¹⁸

However, six weeks later, on April 17th, 2014, during a televised call-in show, Vladimir Putin himself opened the doors of the "store" a little bit, from which the outfitted and armed "little green men" had emerged like Special Operations Forces: "I didn't hide (though until that moment in fact he did --Ed.) that our task was to ensure the conditions for the expression of the free will of the Crimean people... For this reason, our

military servicemen were standing behind the self-defense units of Crimea."¹⁹

Subsequently, Russian servicemen themselves described in an interview for the site Meduza exactly who, and from what moment, was "behind the expression of the free will of the Crimean people."²⁰



Oleg Teryushin, 23 years old, a sergeant in the 31st Ulyanov Guard Paratroopers Assault Brigade, which was fully deployed to Crimea:

"We were among the first on the Crimean peninsula, on February 24th [2014]. We were put on alert in the barracks two days earlier. We formed tactical battalion groups and were flown to Anapa. From Anapa, we were taken in KAMAZ trucks and deployed to Novorossiysk, and from there we sailed to Sevastopol in a large paratroopers' ship. [...]

As soon as we disembarked, we were ordered to remove all our state insignia and military insignia. We were all given green balaclavas, dark glasses, knee pads and elbow pads. [...] I think we were among the first who were called "the polite people." We spent several days in Sevastopol. We were told to settle in and be prepared to carry out any assignment. Soon our brigade moved to the village of Perevalnoye, and pitched a tent camp next to it. It was mainly the Ulyanovsk paratroopers who lived in the camp-- about 2,000 men. This many men were necessary in order to demonstrate the force of Russian troops."

Aleksei Karuna, 20 years old, a recipient of the medal For the Return of Crimea, who was drafted into the aviation unit of the Black Sea Fleet in 2013-2014:

"I first heard about plans for the annexation of Crimea in early February [2014]. At that time, our military was actively moving into the territory of Crimea. They created reinforcements and organized patrols so that God forbid, no Maidan would begin there. On the eve of the referendum, we were warned that an alarm would be announced and that it would be necessary to be prepared. But everything happened extremely quietly because they had amassed such a quantity of troops from Russia onto such a tiny clump of earth! The Black Sea Fleet alone numbers 15,000. There are another 20,000 soldiers on land. Plus, there are the intelligence services in the city. Any resistance would be easily overcome."



Official, though indirect confirmation of the fact that a planned Special Forces operation took place in Crimea was provided by the awarding in the spring of 2014 by the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation of the medal "For the Return of Crimea" (this took place at first in secret -- news about the award was posted on the Internet and later removed).²¹



Medal "For the Return of Crimea," awarded by the Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation.

The first such awards had already been conferred on March 24, 2014. Infantry officers from the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy as well as servicemen from the Central and South Military Districts received the awards directly from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. The fact of the existence of the awards was also confirmed by Yaroslav Roshchupkin, an employee of the Central Military District press service, who said that "In fact, a number of servicemen were awarded these medals." He proceeded to correct himself immediately, saying "the servicemen are not in Crimea" and that they had "helped to implement communications and transportation in Russian territory, and so on..."²²

The lie by the state about the annexation of Crimea lasted in that form for about a year. The curtain of "military secrecy" suddenly began to be lifted starting in January 2015 with the approach of the anniversary celebrations for the "voluntary return of Crimea to Russia.»

As for how "voluntary" the return was, Igor Girkin, the former Defense Minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, recounted on January 22, 2015, on the program "Polit-Ring," broadcast by the online channel Neyromir-TV.

By his own account, Girkin arrived in Crimea on February 21, 2014. "I did not see any support from organizers of state power in Simferopol, where I was located. The militia gathered the deputies [of the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea], I don't know how else to say it. It was to force them into the building, so they would adopt it (a decision on conducting the referendum on the entrance of Crimea to the Russian Federation)."²³ We note that the events described by Girkin (Strelkov) took place on February 27, 2014, immediately after a number of strategic objectives had been taken over by Russian Special Forces on the night of February 26-27, including the parliament building, where, at gunpoint, with no media present and without the video broadcast of sessions as specified by law, the deputies supposedly voted to hold a referendum.

The first high-ranking Russian official who publicly revealed the details of the Russian operation in Crimea was Admiral Igor Kasatonov, the former commander of the Black Sea Fleet. This is what he said on March 13, 2015, in an interview with RIA Novosti: "The Black Sea Fleet has prepared a staging area. The officers knew what was going on around them, such as where the Ukrainian units were located, and the scenario for the unfolding of events was worked out on maps. That is, the Black Sea Fleet fulfilled its assignments -- the "polite people" were delivered, and on February 27-28, the Supreme Council of Crimea was taken," said Kasatonov, explaining that the "polite people" were the Army Special Forces who were brought to Crimea by air and sea.²⁴

In an interview for the documentary film "Crimea: Road to the Motherland," Putin directly acknowledged that he had personally led the operations of the Russian forces in Crimea

Almost immediately after Admiral Kasatonov's statement, Vladimir Putin's candid admission appeared. In an interview for the documentary film "Crimea: Road to the Motherland," which was shown on state TV channel Rossiya-1, the Russian president directly acknowledged that he had personally led the operations of the Russian forces in Crimea.²⁵ Putin also recounted when and under what circumstances he gave the order for the start of the annexation.

Here are three key quotes from Putin:



«It was the night of February 22nd-23rd, the [meeting] had finished at about seven in the morning, and I let everyone go home and went to go to sleep at 7 a.m. And, as we said goodbye, I won't hide it, before everyone had left, I told all my colleagues, and there were four of them, that the situation had taken such a turn in Ukraine that we were forced to begin work on returning Crimea to Russia.»

«In order to blockade and disarm 20,000 people who are well armed, you need a certain kind of force, not just in quantity but in quality. Specialists were needed who knew how to do this. Therefore, I gave the orders and instructions to the Ministry of Defense, why hide it, under the guise of protection of our military facilities in Crimea, to deploy a special division of the Main Intelligence [Directorate] (the GRU) together with naval infantry forces and paratroopers.»

«Do you know what our advantage was? It was the fact that I managed this personally. Not because I did everything correctly, but because, when the highest authorities of the state do this, it's easier for the enforcers to do their work.»

With these public statements, Putin has essentially signed off on the annexation of Crimea and indicated his personal responsibility for these events. It is important to note that in conducting the militarized special operation in Crimea and annexing the peninsula to the Russian Federation, the leadership of Russia has embarked on a deliberate violation of three international treaties previously signed by our country:

1. **The Budapest Memorandum** of December 5, 1994, an article of which states "4.1 The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America confirm to Ukraine their obligation, in accordance with the principles of the Final Act of the CSCE, to respect the independence, sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine."²⁶

2. **The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership Between the Russian Federation and Ukraine**, signed in Kiev on May 31, 1997: "Article 2. The High Contracting Parties, in accordance with the articles of the UN Charter and obligations in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, shall respect each other's territorial integrity and confirm the inviolability of the existing borders between them."²⁷

3. **The Treaty Between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on the Russian-Ukrainian State Border**, signed in Kiev on January 28, 2003, according to which Crimea was and remains an indivisible part of Ukraine.²⁸

Chapter 4

Russian Military in the East of Ukraine



Soon after the annexation of Crimea to Russia, armed resistance began in the territory of the east of Ukraine between Ukrainian forces and separatists who demanded the entry of the Donetsk and Lugansk Regions into the Russian Federation. Russian officials consistently refuted the fact of participation by servicemen of the Russian army in combat actions on Ukrainian territory.

"There have not been and are no Russian army units or military trainers in the south-east of Ukraine. The Americans are lying. We have never been involved in nor are we now involved in the destabilization of the situation in Ukraine," Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in an interview to French television channel TF1 on July 4, 2014.²⁹ Dmitry Peskov, the presidential press secretary, speaking at a round table at TASS on March 31, 2015, stated that the Russian government "resolutely denies" the presence of Russian forces in the zone of the Ukrainian conflict.³⁰

However, the words of Russian officials are refuted by the numerous eyewitness accounts of the presence of Russian army soldiers and officers in the territory of eastern Ukraine. The first such account is from the summer of 2014.

Starting in June 2014, the armed forces of Ukraine undertook a successful offensive against the separatists' positions. The Ukrainians managed to liberate a large number of cities in the Donbass, including Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, and essentially to encircle Donetsk, completely cutting it off from communications with Lugansk. The territories of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) were reduced by three-fourths at the onset of combat actions.³¹ The maintenance of the offensive dynamic brought the Ukrainian Armed Forces significantly closer to their main goal: re-establishing control over the state border.

However, on August 19-20, there was a turning point on the front, and the Ukrainian offensive broke down. This became possible thanks to a massive reinforcement that arrived from the territory of the Russian Federation, including military equipment and regular army units.

In the "hotspots" that emerged along the Russian-Ukrainian border, both the Ukrainian and Russian armies suffered significant losses. Proof of military intervention on the Russian side was provided by the statements of the leaders of the separatists, as well as by eyewitness accounts collected on the territory of the conflict.

A decisive role in the separatists' counteroffensive was played by reinforcements from Russia, including Russian army units

On August 15, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, Prime Minister of the self-proclaimed DPR, stated³² that a reinforcement that came from Russia played a decisive role in the counter-offensive: "(There were) 150 units of combat armor, including about 30 tanks - the rest were AIFVs (Armored Infantry Fighting Vehicles) and APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers), and also 1,200 personnel who had undergone training during four months in the territory of the Russian Federation." Zakharchenko emphasized, "They were inserted here at the most critical moment."

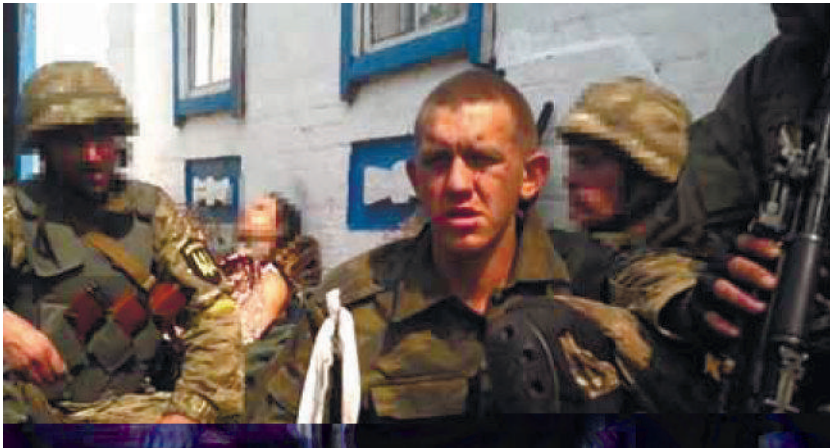
The decisive role played by the reinforcements arriving from Russian territory was confirmed in an interview in the newspaper "Zavtra"³³ by the former DPR Minister Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov). The shifting of the front and in particular the deployment to Mariupol were achieved, in his words, "largely by vacationers, individual units of the militia which were subordinate to them." "Vacationers" in Girkin's terminology are Russian military cadres who come to the territory of Ukraine with weapons in their hands but who are officially "on vacation."

An order of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation prohibits the Russian military from taking part in the combat operations while on vacation.

The story that Russian soldiers and officers fought in the Donbass in the summer of 2014 by taking "legal holidays" was actively supported by DPR leader Aleksandr Zakharchenko. "A lot of soldiers come to us from Russia, soldiers who prefer to spend their vacation not on seashores but in the same ranks with their brothers as they battle for freedom in the Donbass," said Zakharchenko on the air on Rossiya-24.³⁴ The story about the "vacationers" was actively disseminated on Channel One as well, as for example on September 4, 2014³⁵, in a story about the funeral of Kostroma paratrooper Anatoly Travkin who was killed in Ukraine. "A month ago, he headed to the Donbass, not saying anything about it to his friends. The commander of the unit emphasized: in order to travel to a combat zone, Anatoly took leave," says the Channel One anchor.

It is important to note that members of the military who serve under contract in the Russian Armed Forces are directly prohibited from taking part in combat during vacation.³⁶ The servicemen maintain their status while

Accounts of Russian Tank Drivers Near Ilovaisk



In August 2014, another group of Russian servicemen was detained in the territory of Ukraine: their interrogation was published by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU)

Photo: Interrogation of Detained Russian Tank Drivers
Screenshot of a video published on YouTube.

In August 2014, another group of Russian servicemen was detained in the territory of Ukraine: their interrogation was published by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU)⁴¹. In responding to the questions of Ukrainian representatives, the detainees confirmed that they were active servicemen in the Russian army.

A total of four soldiers were detained. They reported the following information about themselves: Ivan Aleksandrovich, born in 1988 in Vologda, serviceman in Unit No. 54096, 6th Separate Tank Brigade; Yevgeny Yuryevich, born in 1995 in Kaluga, serviceman in Unit No. 54096, 6th Separate Tank Brigade; Nikita Genadyevich, born in 1993 in Yaroslavl, 31st Guards Air Assault Brigade, Unit No. 73612; Yevgeny Ashotovich, born in 1994, 1st Guards 57th Separate Brigade, Unit No. 73612.

Accounts of Pvt. Khokhlov

Khokhlov confirmed that his military unit organized the deployment of military armor to the territory of Ukraine

On August 16, yet another Russian Federation serviceman gave testimony published by the Ukrainian SBU, Pvt. Pyotr Sergeyevich Khokhlov, a contract soldier from the 1st Motorized Battalion of the 9th Separate Motorized Brigade of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (Novy, Nizhegorodskaya Region) of the 20th Army (Mulino) Western Military District.⁴²

During his interrogation, he confirmed that his military unit organized the deployment of military equipment of the Russian Army in the territory of Ukraine to participate in combat against the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Among the equipment deployed to the Donbass were Grad BM-21 multiple launch rocket systems, BMP-2 armored infantry fighting vehicles (AIFVs), and BTR-80 armored personnel carriers (APCs).

Before sending the military equipment to the Donbass, according to Khokhlov, their factory identification marks and license plates were removed, and their insignia was painted over. This was done

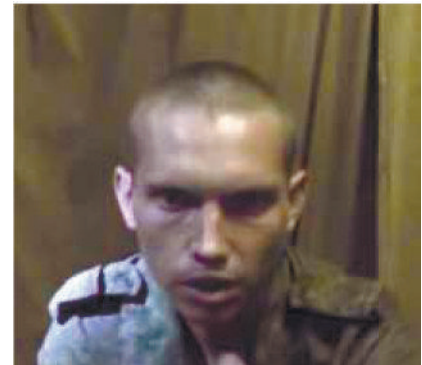


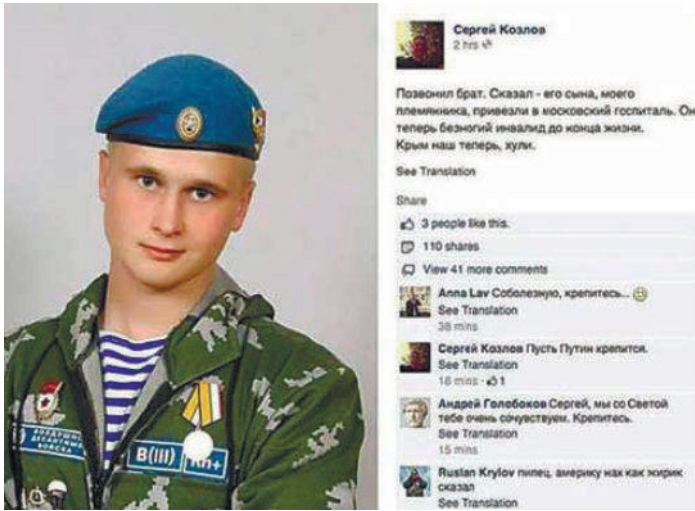
Photo: Interrogation of Pvt. Khokhlov
Screenshot of a video published on YouTube.

in order to conceal the fact that the military equipment was the property of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Khokhlov confirmed that he personally took part in handing over the prepared military equipment (14 AIFVs) to the separatists on the Ukrainian border.

Khokhlov stated that on August 8th, he went AWOL with his fellow serviceman Ruslan Garafiyev and arrived in the Lugansk Region. According to Khokhlov, they intended to join the separatists' armed forces in the hope of receiving more generous compensation than that of the Russian contract soldiers. On August 27, Khokhlov was detained, in the village of Novosvetlovka by the Ukrainian military and transferred to officers of the SBU.

Paratrooper Kozlov

Photo: Nikolai Kozlov in the uniform of a soldier of the Airborne Troops of Russia.



In September 2014, news became known⁴³ about Nikolai Kozlov, a serviceman of the 31st Separate Guards Air Assault Brigade, who had fought in the Donbass and lost his leg as a result of his wounds. His uncle, Sergei Kozlov, posted information about the young man on social media.

According to the information from the Ozersk military commission office, 21-year-old Nikolai Kozlov, a car mechanic by profession, was drafted into the army before June 2013 and performed his military service in Troop Unit No. 73612 of the 31st Separate Guards Air Assault Brigade. Starting on August 1, 2013, he served in the same unit on contract.

Kozlov took part in operations in the territory of Ukraine from the very beginning of the conflict. In March 2014, he participated in the blockading of military bases in the Crimea by Russian soldiers. It is important to note that Russian serviceman Kozlov performed his combat assignments in Crimea while wearing the uniform of a Ukrainian policeman. This is proven by the photos that his uncle published on the social network VKontakte in May of 2014.

They sent him to fight in the Donbass in August of 2014, when the Russian army began a large-scale operation

Translation of Chat in Screenshot:

*Sergei Kozlov: My brother called. Said his son, my nephew, was brought to a Moscow hospital. He is now missing a leg and will be disabled for the rest of his life. Crimea is ours now, f**k.*

Anna Lav: My sympathies, be strong...

Sergei Kozlov: Let Putin be strong.

Andrei Golobokov: Sergei, Sveta and I send our sympathies. Be strong.

*Ruslan Krylov: S**t, f**k America as Zhirik [Zhirinovskiy] said.*

According to the paratrooper's uncle, this photo was taken in the hallway of the Crimean Supreme Soviet: Kozlov took part in the blockading of the building under the guise of an officer of the Interior Ministry of Ukraine [the police]. Upon completion of the operation, he returned home to Ulyanovsk, was awarded the medal "For Return of Crimea," and got married. He was sent to fight in the Donbass in August 2014, when the Russian army began a wide-scale operation to repel the offensive of Ukrainian troops against the separatists' positions. Kozlov took part in combat operations over the course of two weeks. According to his relatives, he specifically carried out combat assignments against the artillery positions of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

As Sergei Kozlov recounted, his nephew's unit was ambushed during an attempt to free a fellow serviceman who had been taken prisoner. On August 24, the unit fell under fire from armor-piercing weapons, and a shell tore off Kozlov's leg. After that, he was transferred back across the border and landed in a Rostov hospital. He was later transferred to Moscow.



Photo: Nikolai Kozlov in the uniform of a Ukrainian policeman during the operation in the Crimea, from VKontakte, REUTERS/Marko Djurica

Soldiers Disguised as Volunteers

After the August counter-offensive by the separatists and units of the Russian army, peace talks were held in Minsk with the participation of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin. As a result of the consultations, the two sides managed to come to an agreement on a ceasefire, which froze the conflict in Ukrainian territory for a time.

The next active phase of combat operations began in late 2014. By January 2015, the Russian military once again took an active part in resistance to the Ukrainian Armed Forces and ensured the separatists' offensive against the strategically important city of Debaltsevo.

This time, before they were sent to the combat zone, the Russian soldiers turned in their resignations to their commanders

This time, before deploying into the combat zone, Russian servicemen submitted reports of resignation to their commanders. The newspaper Kommersant published a report on this on February 19th.⁴⁴ A Kommersant correspondent managed to get an interview with four contract soldiers in the Russian



army who confirmed that during the stage of combat preparation, their commanders did not hide their intention to send the soldiers to fight in Ukraine. On the eve of their deployment to the combat zone, the soldiers wrote letters of resignation so that, in the event of their detention or death, they would be identified as volunteers, and not as professional soldiers.

Moreover, the soldiers stated that, as contrasted to the summer offensive of the Russian army, when military units crossed the border in convoys, this time the deployment was carried out in small groups of three people each.

The Confession of Lt. Colonel Okanev

On February 13, 2015, it became known that the command of the 536th Fleet Independent Coastal Defense Missile Artillery Brigade Army Unit No. 10544, based in the Murmansk Region, intended to send contract soldiers to the east of Ukraine to perform combat assignments.

This information was made available thanks to the publication of an audiotape of a speech given to servicemen by the zampolit [the officer in Russian army units responsible for political education and morale--Trans.] of Army Unit 10544, Lt. Vyacheslav Okanev. The speech was secretly recorded on a tape recorder by one of the soldiers present.⁴⁵ The conversation took place on the eve of the deployment of the Murmansk contractors to the Russian troops' base near the border with Ukraine.

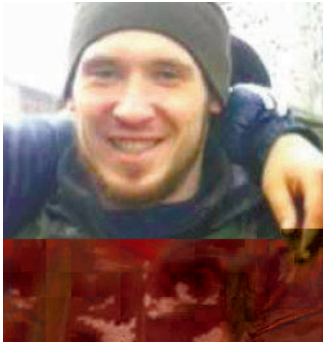
«There may be a situation in which you will be deployed near the borders of Ukraine, then, once you are there, there may be combat assignments as well that could directly come up, and then you will

follow combat orders. I can't exclude the possibility that you may cross into the territory of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions to provide direct help there," explained the Lt. Col. Okanev to the servicemen.

«Combat assignments might come up, and then you will follow combat orders»

"Yes, no one has officially declared war on anyone else. But we must provide help in all senses of the word," the officer emphasized in his speech. Okanev also explained that since "officially war has not been declared" there would be no guarantee of cash payments in the event of the death or wounding of Russian servicemen.

Lt. Col. Vyacheslav Okanev confirmed the authenticity of the audiotape in an interview with Gazeta.ru on February 13, 2015.



The Confession of Volunteer Sapozhnik

He also indicated that Russian servicemen were informed in advance of the deployment to the combat zone in Ukrainian territory: "Here I also met only Russian [Federation] contractors. Near Debaltsevo there was a Buryat unit in which there were only Buryats. They said that they all understood perfectly where they were going, but officially it was said: we are

On March 31, 2015, a statement by Dmitry Sapozhnikov, a participant in combat in the Donbass, was published, in which he publicly revealed the participation of the Russian Army in armed conflict.⁴⁶ Sapozhnikov was a citizen of the Russian Federation and was sent to fight on the territory of Ukraine as a volunteer. As he explained, he performed the function of a commander of a division of the Special Forces of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR).

In his description of the breakout of his division from their encirclement in the village of Logvinovo, Sapozhnikov indicated the help coming from Russia. "Our tanks came to help. Tanks and Russian divisions came from the direction of the LPR (Lugansk People's Republic). This was the Russian Army – they were Buryats. Thanks to them, indeed thanks to that heavy armor, we took Debaltsevo," Sapozhnikov said.



Boris Nemtsov's Sources

In early February 2015, citizens representing the relatives of Russian Federation soldiers who had been killed in the Donbass appealed to Boris Nemtsov. They asked for help in obtaining payments to their families from the Russian Federation Defense Ministry. Nemtsov's interlocutors, referencing the relatives of the soldiers, helped to establish the chronology of the entrance of Russian [Federation] forces into the territory of Ukraine.

In their words, massive numbers of Russian [Federation] soldiers were killed in the east of Ukraine during two periods. The first wave of coffins came to Russia in the summer of 2014, when the Ukrainian Army went on the offensive. The Ukrainian offensive was halted after direct interference by units of the Russian Army. Despite the successful resistance against Ukrainian units, the Russian Armed Forces suffered losses. A significant number of soldiers were killed, in particular, in the battles for the city of Ilovaisk. According to the most modest assessment, no less than 150 coffins were returned to Russia with the mark "Cargo 200" [the Russian military term for those killed in battle--Trans.].

This information did not manage to be hidden, and journalists then shed light on the situation as it came about. However, to the surprise of many, not only did the authorities hinder the independent investigation, but the families of the dead soldiers did so as well. According to information from Nemtsov's source, this was explained by the fact that relatives received 3 million rubles each [US \$59,994] in compensation. At the same time, they signed non-disclosure statements under threat of criminal prosecution.

The second wave of coffins came to Russia in mass numbers in January and early February 2015. According to our analysis, at least 70 Russian [Federation] military were killed in the east of Ukraine. At a minimum, 17 Russian paratroopers who had come from the city of Ivanovo were killed in the territory of Ukraine. (A handwritten note about this from Boris Nemtsov was obtained by the authors of this report.)

The mass killing of Russian [Federation] soldiers was connected to an escalation of the conflict and of resistance, notably near the city of Debaltsevo. Unlike the previous year, this time Russian [Federation] soldiers officially resigned from the Armed Forces at the demand of the leadership before being sent to the Donbass. Thus, it was planned to hide the participation of our army in battles by presenting them as military volunteers. Based on the word of honor of the commanders, the soldiers were guaranteed that in the event of injury or death, their relatives would be paid compensation commensurate with the sums, which had been paid in the summer of 2014.

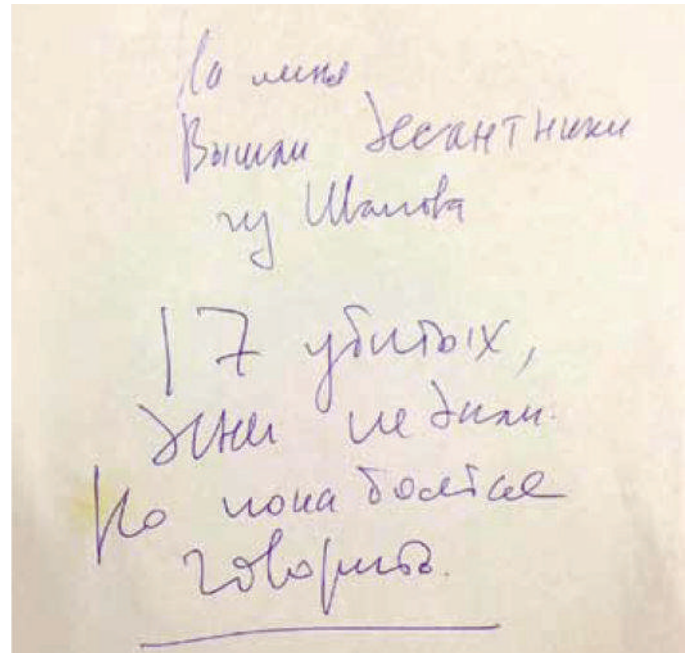


Photo: Note made by Boris Nemtsov not long before his murder. Text: «Paratroopers from Ivanovo got in touch with me. 17 killed. No cash. But for now they are afraid to talk.»

However, in practice, this time the relatives received no compensation whatsoever. Officially, there was no way for them to appeal for compensation, since formally, the soldiers who had been killed were no longer servicemen.

The relatives began to express dissatisfaction and to seek lawyers who could defend their rights (it was thanks to this that the information reached Nemtsov). Even so, they feared speaking in public due to the non-disclosure statements they had signed. As Nemtsov's sources maintain, the high-profile criminal case against Svetlana Davydova, a mother of 7 children, on charges of state treason on behalf of Ukraine, served the purpose of intimidating those relatives of the dead soldiers killed who were considering making contact with journalists. At least, the families of killed soldiers were often reminded about that case and they were threatened with criminal prosecution in case of their disclosure of information regarding circumstances of their relatives' deaths.

Despite the fact that the promised payments were never made, the families of Russian [Federation] soldiers refused to make public statements. Moreover, the murder of Boris Nemtsov convinced them to withdraw any demands they had made to Russian authorities. Their reason was fear of criminal prosecution and concern for their own lives.

"If Nemtsov was shot in front of the Kremlin walls, then anything at all can be done to our clients in Ivanovo. No one would ever notice," said a lawyer representing the families of two of the dead paratroopers. He formulated for the authors of this report the common position of the relatives.

Chapter 5

Volunteers or Mercenaries?



Regular units of the Russian Army have largely predetermined the military success of the separatists in the east of Ukraine. However, reinforcement from a number of so-called “volunteers” who constantly travel from Russia to the zone of armed conflict has played a visible role in the armed forces of the DPR and LPR.

From the very outset of conflict in the territory of Ukraine, Russian citizens began to come who either organized militarized groups themselves or who joined already-formed detachments. Among such fighters have been quite a few former officers of the Russian [Federation] special services [intelligence] and career military officers, including people with combat experience in hot spots and people with criminal pasts.

Often, these citizens become key figures in the separatists' troops, people like former intelligence officer Igor Girkin, "Chechen war" veteran Arseny Pavlov (aka "Motorola") and Aleksandr Mozhayev (aka "Babay"), who was charged with attempted murder by the Krasnodar prosecutor's office.

The recruitment, arming, and deployment of Russian [Federation] "volunteers" in the territory of Ukraine is frequently organized under the direct participation of Russian [Federation] authorities.

Mercenaries

In August 2014, DPR Prime Minister Aleksandr Zakharchenko stated: "We have never hidden the fact that there are many Russians among us [i.e. people from the Russian Federation--Trans.], without whose help it would have been very hard for us, it would have been more difficult to fight."⁴⁸ By Zakharchenko's admission, there are 3,000 to 4,000 Russian [Federation] “volunteers” among the separatists.

Vyacheslav Tetekin, a Russian State Duma deputy and a member of the Committee for Defense, estimated the number of "volunteers" who had taken part and were continuing to take part in combat actions in the Donbass to be 30,000 people. "Some fought a week there, some fought for several months, but according to the information of the authorities of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics themselves, approximately 30,000 volunteers have gone through combat," he emphasized.⁴⁹ This same deputy submitted for State Duma review a draft law on conferring upon "volunteers" the status of participants in combat with all the relevant benefits.⁵⁰

The process of recruiting and deploying the "volunteers" to Donbass was organized by civic organizations loyal to the Kremlin. In particular, Frants Klintsevich⁵¹, State Duma deputy from the United Russia party, and the head of the Russian

Union of Veterans, publicly confirmed his role in this process. As the "volunteers" testify themselves, the recruiting centers for future militants are often the military commissions [draft boards--Trans.] of Russian cities.

The recruitment, arming, and deployment of “volunteers” to the East of Ukraine is frequently organized under the participation of Russian authorities

In September 2014, a Russian citizen fighting in the ranks of the separatists in the Donbass described in detail⁵² the organization of the process for "volunteers". According to his testimony, recruitment of Russian citizens into the ranks of the "people's militia" of the DPR and LPR takes place in Russian [Federation] cities through military commissions, veterans' and Cossack organizations, which organize the centralized arrival of the fighters in the conflict zone. Citizens who express a readiness to travel to the territory of Ukraine independently are sent in their individual capacity to Rostov-on-Don, where their tickets are then reimbursed.



Photo: Aleksandr Mozhayev ("Babay") and DPR fighters.

It is in the Rostov Region where the material base is organized and system of training of the fighters before they end up with weapons in their hands in the ranks of the separatists. They receive their deployment, combat assignment and equipment immediately before crossing the border.

Russian "volunteers" fighting in Ukraine receive from 60,000 to 90,000 rubles

The main contingent of the "volunteers" is comprised by former military and law-enforcement officers, in other words, people who have experience handling a weapon. The recruiters strive to pick people of middle age. Young people are not a priority for the recruiters since they still maintain strong ties to their relatives: the killing of a "volunteer" creates risks of a public expression of dissatisfaction on the part of the "volunteer"'s relatives.

The Russian citizen "volunteers" in the Donbass receive material compensation.

Cash for supporting the fighters comes from Russian foundations, which are funded with the active support of Russian Federation authorities.

According to the fighters themselves, the average pay for a "volunteer" is 60,000 rubles a month, although "there are those who receive 80,000, 90,000, and some commanders get even more." For comparison, in January 2015, the average monthly salary in Russia was 31,200 rubles, according to the Ministry of Economic Development.⁵³ The period of a "volunteer"'s service is determined by the "volunteers" themselves, but the minimum duration of a trip is one month.

Important testimony was provided by a recruiter of the "volunteers" from Yekaterinburg, Vladimir Yefimov, the director of a veterans' foundation and a Special Forces soldier in the Sverdlovsk Region. He confirmed⁵⁴ that Russian [citizen] "volunteers" who take part in combat actions in the Donbass received payment for this. "There are standards of pay: the rank-and-file staff receive 60,000 to 90,000 rubles a month, and the senior staff get 120,000 to 150,000. They say now that the pay has gone up to 240,000," Yefimov stated. He also reported that, "on average, a fighter with equipment and pay" costs about 350,000 rubles a month.

Furthermore, Yefimov confirmed that one of the means used to send Russian [citizen] fighters to Ukrainian territory is the so-called "humanitarian operations." Essentially he is saying that the military invasion is carried out under the guise of humanitarian deliveries.

"The first time they went under the guise of the Red Cross. They received papers from the local department explaining that we were the escort. When we arrived, those people then remained. They were given weapons and combat assignments. Now we are also loading guys into the humanitarian aid trucks and sending them," Yefimov recounted.

Artyom, a "volunteer" from St. Petersburg, says⁵⁵ that people are sent to the Donbass from various regions of Russia, and once in place they receive equipment and uniforms in centralized fashion: "Some are in their own uniform, if it is convenient and customary, but as a rule, all are dressed up in army uniforms, without any insignia, identifying marks or even manufacturers' labels. The weapons are old army weapons, some even from Soviet warehouses. They do not give them any of the newest sniper rifles, or any machine guns which are not in the arsenal of the Ukrainian forces."

Tv2, the regional Tomsk TV station that was closed by authorities in December 2014, broadcast a show on the send-off of a detachment of local "volunteers" who went off to the war in Lugansk. The report was filmed at the location from which the bus left with the future LPR fighters. The All-Russian Union of Veterans of Afghanistan organized the send-off. According to Mikhail Kolmakov, head of the local chapter of this organization, such detachments are sent to the Donbass from various Siberian cities.

The Tomsk volunteers were outfitted thanks to cash from donors whose names the organizers of the send-off prefer not to provide.⁵⁶

The collected testimonies confirm that a significant number of the Russian [citizen] fighters in the Donbass were sent to the territory of Ukraine in an organized fashion, were given relevant training and preparation, and received material compensation: the "volunteers" themselves received cash compensation for participation in combat actions. This can be seen as evidence of a crime under Art. 359 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Current Russian legislation enables the identification of the so-called Russian [citizen] volunteers in the Donbass as mercenaries. The Criminal Code, in particular, states: "A mercenary is defined as a person acting in the interests of receiving material compensation who is not a citizen of the state participating in the armed conflict or in military actions, who does not resident permanently on its territory, and who is not sent on the performance of official duties."⁵⁷

In fact, Russian investigative bodies exclusively prosecute only those Russian citizens who take part in combat actions on the side of the Ukrainian forces. Thus, in October 2014, a criminal case was opened against Roman Zheleznov, a resident of Moscow, who joined the Ukrainian Azov battalion.⁵⁸ The same fighters who join the ranks of the separatists don't encounter any problem with the law in Russia. President Vladimir Putin explained⁵⁹ that "people who perform their duty by the call of their heart" who take part in combat actions cannot be viewed as mercenaries.

Current Russian legislation enables the identification of "volunteers" in the Donbass as mercenaries

The Kadyrovtsi

A visible role in the separatists' armed forces is played by the reinforcement coming to the territory of Ukraine from the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. These people are identified as supporters of Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechnya, and often come from law-enforcement agencies under his control.

On December 16, 2014, Ramzan Kadyrov publicly expressed his readiness to go to the zone of conflict in the east of Ukraine and personally take part in combat actions. "I intend to ask the president to release me from my post so that I can go to Donbass and defend the interests on the ground of exactly those citizens who are fighting there. So that even those such as these Satans can be caught and destroyed, since they have no honor and no conscience," Kadyrov said on NTV.⁶⁰

Kadyrov himself has never appeared on Ukrainian territory. However, eyewitness accounts prove that the fighters trained by Kadyrov in law-enforcement agencies play an active role in the clashes in the Donbass.

The first group of the Kadyrovtsy [as such fighters are known] joined the separatist Vostok Battalion. Its commander Aleksandr Khodakovsky confirmed on June 1, 2014 that in the spring Chechens under his direction who had come from Russia battled Ukrainian troops.⁶¹

In fact, evidence of the presence of armed Chechen fighters on Ukrainian territory had appeared even earlier. For instance, on May 26, 2014, a video of a rally of DPR supporters in Donetsk was made public. A truck was parked on a square filled with two dozen people primarily of [North] Caucasian appearance who were armed with automatic rifles. In a conversation with a CNN correspondent⁶², one of them stated: "We are Kadyrovtsy." When the journalist asked a follow-up question to clarify this, the man confirmed that he was from a Chechen law-enforcement agency.

On May 26, news of the first serious losses among the Chechen fighters fighting on the side of the separatists was made public. On the same day, DPR divisions stormed the Donetsk Airport, which was under control of the Ukrainian forces. During the battle, two of the KamAZ trucks which had transported the fighters were destroyed. Denis Kloss, a trauma physician who came to help the separatists from Chukotka Autonomous Region of the Russian Federation testified specifically about the participation of Chechens in these clashes: "I was in the second truck with the wounded Chechens. A mortar fell under the bottom of the truck, the truck turned over, and the front wheels were blown off. Then the shelling began, and we began to run down vehicles on the road, load up the wounded and head to the hospitals," he said.

Photo: RF President Vladimir Putin and Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the Chechen Republic



Then-DPR Prime Minister Aleksandr Boroday stated that 33 Russian citizens were identified among those killed on May 26th. Boroday emphasized that Chechnya natives “prepared to defend their Russian brothers”⁶³ were battling among the ranks of the fighters.

The next massive reinforcement of Chechen fighters came to the Donbass in August 2014

Donetsk mayor Aleksandr Lukyanchenko added that 43 wounded, including citizens who had come from the Chechen cities of Grozny and Gudermes, came to the hospital after the battle at the airport.⁶⁴ According to Kloss' testimony, after the failed battle at the Donetsk Airport and following significant losses, the Kadyrovtsy "were no longer in agreement with such a war and returned to Chechnya."⁶⁵ This information was confirmed on June 1st, 2014: in his words, the Chechens who were fighting in the battalion "left, taking their wounded."

The next massive reinforcement of Chechen fighters came to the Donbass in August 2014, when the Russian Army's large-scale operation began: its purpose was to halt the offensive of the armed forces of Ukraine against the separatists' positions.

On August 29th, 2014, a video taken by one of the Chechen fighters on the Russian-Ukrainian border on the eve of the invasion appeared. The video includes a conversation in Chechen in front of a convoy of tanks and other armor, in which the following is said: "This is our convoy, you can't see the start, you can't see the end, and we have prepared for invasion."

“Allah Akbar!” the fighter says on camera. "Here are our Chechen guys. These tank drivers are Chechens."

"We're going to wage war, so that the khokhli [pejorative term for Ukrainians—Trans.] are scattered to the whole world."

“Inshallah!” replies the engineer driver in sunglasses sticking his head out from under the hatch of the tank.⁶⁶

After publication of this video, Boris Nemtsov sent officials inquiries to the Federal Security Service (FSB) of Russia and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation demanding an investigation of the unlawful crossing of the border by armed persons. But not a single one of these bodies gave Nemtsov a

Political Party Republican Party of Russia – Party of People's Freedom
115035, Moscow, Pyatnitskaya ul. 14 bldg. 1 tel. +7(495)-953-46-80 email:

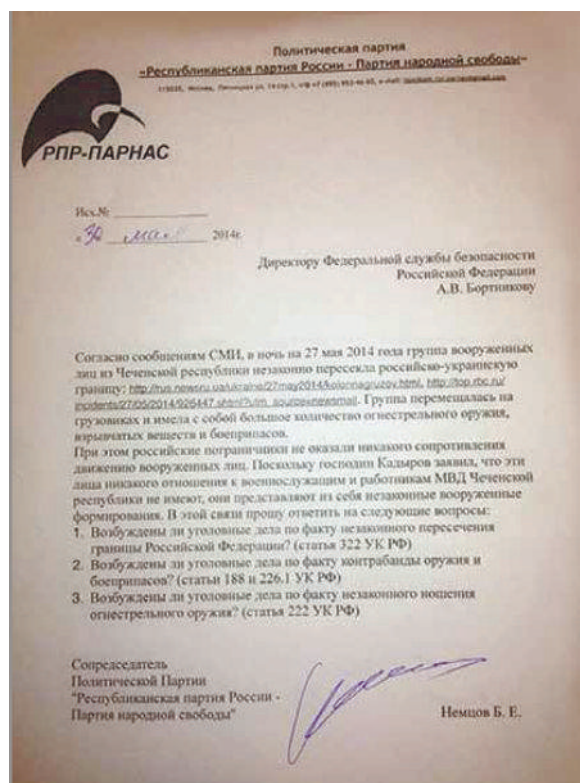
RPR-PARNAS
No. 25/OC
May 30, 2014
To: A. B. Bortnikov
Director Federal Security Service Russian Federation

According to media reports, on the night of May 27, 2014, a group of armed persons from the Chechen Republic illegally crossed the Russian-Ukrainian border:
<http://rus.newsru.ua/ukraine/27may2014/kolonnagruzov.html>,
http://top.rbc.ru/incidents/27/05/2014/926447.shtml?utm_source=newsmail
The group was traveling in trucks and had with them a large quantity of firearms, explosives, and ammunition.

Furthermore, Russian border guards did not display any resistance to the movement of the armed persons. Since Mr. Kadyrov has stated that these persons have no relationship to the servicemen and employees of the Interior Ministry of the Chechen Republic, they represent unlawful armed formations. In that connection, I ask you to answer the following questions:

1. Have criminal cases been opened regarding the fact of the unlawful crossing of the border of the Russian Federation? (Art. 322 of the RF Criminal Code)
2. Have criminal cases been opened regarding the fact of contraband weapons and ammunition? (Art. 188 and Art. 226.1 of the RF Criminal Code).
3. Have criminal cases been opened regarding the fact of unlawful bearing of firearms? (Art. 222 of the RF Criminal Code).

Co-Chairman Political Party Republican Party of Russia - Popular Freedom Party
Boris Nemtsov





Чеченские бойвики на Донбассе Photos: Chechen fighters in Donbass
REUTERS/Alexei Nikolsky/RIA Novosti/Pool



On August 30th, a video was published which had been taken by some of Kadyrov's fighters during the "clean-up" of the city of Horlivka. The video shows a group of completely outfitted armed people in the street who are speaking a mix of the Russian and Chechen languages. "This is the clean-up crew," says the cameraman filming the fighters.⁶⁷

After the signing of the peace agreements in Minsk, on September 5th, 2014, a significant number of the Kadyrov fighters remained in the separatist-controlled territory of the Donbass. Proof of the presence of the armed Chechens in the ranks of the separatists continued to appear systematically and periodically.

On December 12th, 2014 an interview was published⁶⁸ with a Chechen fighter known as "Talib," who was fighting in Donbass in the ranks of the separatists: during the interview, he threatened to kill the Ukrainian deputy Igor Mosychuk for having insulted Ramzan Kadyrov. "He is a dead man, I have signed the death sentence myself," said the Chechen. "We Kadyrovtsy help the Slavic people here," he added.

On November 19, 2014 it was documented in writing that the separate Chechen battalion "Smert'" [Death] was created from veterans of law-enforcement structures. Marina Akhmedova, a special correspondent to *Rusky Reporter*, published statements⁶⁹ of the battalion commander made on the territory of his base camp in Donetsk region. Fighters from this battalion, in particular, participated in the battles for the Donetsk airport and Ilovaik city. Among members of this battalion "90 percent are former separatists", who fought against the Russian army, who laid down their arms "under amnesty" and joined law-enforcement structures controlled by Ramzan Kadyrov.

The identity of one of the commanders of the "Death" Battalion was established: Apti Denisoltanovich Bolotkhanov, former commander of the 3rd Patrol Company in the South Battalion of the Interior Troops of the Russian Interior Ministry (Army Unit 4157, permanent base town of Vedeno, Chechen Republic). He has the rank of major in the Interior Ministry of Russia, and in February 2008, by decree of Kadyrov, he was awarded the medal "For Merits to the Chechen Republic."

On December 10th, 2014, a video was aired that recorded the movements of the Sever [North] Battalion in the territory of the Donbass. One of the commanders of the battalion known as "Stinger" stated⁷⁰ that the battalion numbers "about 300 fighters

throughout Donetsk Region" who have a minimum combat experience of 10 years. In his words, up to 70% of the fighters come from the Special Forces, and, the majority of them have received state awards. "We are the soldiers of the Russian army and the Russian special services [intelligence] including combat veterans," the fighter emphasized.

Thus, in the fall of 2014, news became known of another organized group of Chechens fighting against the Ukrainian army in the east of the country, a detachment under the fighter known as "Dikiy" ("wild"). In December 2014, there was an interview with Dikiy.⁷¹ According to him, the detachment is based in the city of Krasnodon and carries out its patrol. The fighter said that he would be glad to have Ramzan Kadyrov visit the Donbass. "If he comes here, then we need about three months in order to establish order here. We would be glad if he came here."

On January 7th, 2015, in a video, Diky and his fighters⁷² gave further details about their unit. According to Dikiy, there are "mainly Chechens" under his command. The unit specifically takes part in combat operations in the cities of Krasnodon and Schastiye.



On the left – Apti Bolotkhanov, commander of the Chechen Battalion «Smert'.

Chapter 6

Cargo 200



With each passing day, armed resistance in the Donbass is increasing the number of victims on both sides. In April 2015, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) documented the deaths of 6,108 people in the conflict zone and further noted in its report that these data are “conservative” and do not include information about those killed during the worsening of the conflict in January-February 2015.⁷³

From the very onset of the conflict, the Russian authorities have strenuously hidden the data on the number of Russian Federation citizens killed in the territory of Ukraine, and even more the number of Russian servicemen who took part in combat actions. However, it was impossible to completely hide this information.

For example, on June 2nd, 2014, photojournalist Maria Turchenkova published a report⁷⁴ on the crossing of the Ukrainian-Russian border by a truck with the marking "Cargo-200." The truck was returning the bodies of 31 citizens of the Russian Federation to the Motherland - they had been killed in May during the storming of the Donetsk Airport. The Russian citizenship of the deceased was confirmed by Aleksandr Boroday, then head of the self-proclaimed DPR. In essence, this was the first documented confirmation of the participation of Russian citizens in the war in the Donbass.

Aside from the coffins, Turchenkova managed to photograph several notices from the Donetsk Regional Bureau of Forensic Medical Examination on the death of Russian citizens who bodies were transported across the border.

In particular, among those killed was Yury Fyodorovich Abrosimov, born 1982. The death of Sergei Broisovich Zhdanovich, born 1966, was also documented, who was known as a retired instructor at the Russian FSB's Center for Special Assignment, a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya. Not long before he was killed in Donetsk, he went through preparation in a training camp in Rostov Region.



Photo by Maria Turchenkova

Information about the Russian servicemen killed in Donbas remained secret for a long time. The Russian military authorities declared the soldiers killed as having died in training in Rostov Region. The family of the soldiers killed also tried not to attract attention to what happened. As became known from the sources of Boris Nemtsov, the relatives of the soldiers killed in 2014 received large financial compensations, and also signed non-disclosure statements.

The first evidence of Russian military killed on Ukrainian territory was published by the Pskov deputy Lev Shlosberg. He reported⁷⁵ that on August 25, 2015, near Pskov, two servicemen were buried at the Vybuty Cemetery: Leonid Yuryevich Kichatkin (30.09.1984-19.08.2014) and Aleksandr Sergeyevich Osipov (15.12.1993-20.08.2014).

sign up

Leonid Kichatkin last seen yesterday at 4:21 pm

Leonid Kichatkin

Birthday: September 30, 1984
 Current city: Pskov
 Mobile: 6921212777777
 Alt. phone: не скажу

Show full information

231 photos see all

Join VK now to stay in touch with Leonid and millions of others. Or login, if you have a VK account.

Leonid's followers: 15

Noteworthy pages: 1 page

29 posts

Leonid Kichatkin
 дорогие друзья!!!!!!! Приветствую похоронь в воспоминание в 10 часов утра отпывание в Выбуты. Кто сможет помочь попросится приезжайте всех разе будет видеть. Если кто ной номер [redacted] [redacted]
 Yesterday at 4:14 pm 17 63

Photo: VKontakte page of Leonid Kichatkin

On the eve of the funeral, Oksana Kichatkina, wife of Leonid Kichatkin, posted about the killing of her husband on the social network VKontakte: "Life has stopped!!!!!!!!!!!" "Lyona [Leonid] has been killed, the funeral is Monday at 10:00 am, the memorial service is in Vybuty. Whoever would like to pay their respects, please come, we will be happy to see everybody." "The funeral will be held on Monday at 11:00 a.m. in Vybuty." However, soon these posts were removed and in their place a message appeared that Kichatkin was alive: "My husband is alive and well and now we're celebrating our daughter's baptism."⁷⁶

The first post turned out to be the truth, which was proven by the appearance in Vybuty of the graves of Pskov paratroopers Leonid Kichatkin and Aleksandr Osipov.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Vladimir Shamanov, commander of the Airborne Troops (VDV) claims that the 76th division did not take part in combat actions in the territory of Ukraine and accordingly, that it had not suffered combat losses. Meanwhile, according to the testimony of Lev Shlossberg, a deputy in the local legislature in Pskov, it was the 76th division that in fact had buried the paratroopers who were killed. Moreover, a week before the funeral, Vladimir Putin had awarded the servicemen of this division with the Order of Suvorov "For Successful Performance of Combat Assignments by the Command and Display of Personal Courage and Heroism."⁷⁷



Soon, Shlossberg published new evidence he had obtained: the transcript of conversations of servicemen after they left the combat zone.⁷⁸

Voice 2: How many people were killed then, f***?

Voice 1: Well up to...

Voice 2: You don't know, really? Well, about 40, 50, 100, dammit?

Voice 1: 80.

Voice 2: Eighty?

Voice 1: Uh-huh... That's along with Cheryokha...

Voice 2: That's one company?

Voice 1: That's along with Cheryokha, with Promezhitsi [towns in Pskov Region--Trans.], everything together.

Voice 2: Because there were rumors, f***, that there were 140, f...

Voice 1: Really? Perhaps.

Voice 2: Well, that was from Pskov.

Voice 1: Well, I don't know, it's along with Promezhitsi, Cheryokha, with all of them.

Voice 2: So wait, look, f***, how can we figure out now who is alive and who is dead?

Voice 1: Lists. Well, in the list there are 10 people who remained alive.



Вскоре Лев Шлосберг обнаружил новые доказательства, оказавшиеся в его распоряжении: расшифровки разговоров военнослужащих после выхода из зоны боевых действий.

«Голос 2: Сколько человек погибло то, б..?»

Голос 1: Да до...

Голос 2: Ты не знаешь вообще? Ну человек 40, 50, 100, блин?

Голос 1: 80.

Голос 2: Восемьдесят?

Голос 1: Угу... Это вместе с Черёхой...

Голос 2: Это одну роту?

Голос 1: Это вместе с Черёхой, с Промежицами, всё вместе.

Голос 2: Потому что слух шёл, б... , что там 140, нах...

Голос 1: Да? Может быть.

Голос 2: Ну это со Пскова.

Голос 1: Ну не знаю, это вместе с Промежицами, Черёхой, со всеми.

Голос 2: Так подожди, смотри, б... , как теперь вычислить, кто живой, кто мёртвый?

Голос 1: Списки. Ну в списке там человек десять нас осталось в живых.*



After the publication of these materials, Lev Shlossberg was assaulted and brutally beaten.⁷⁹

On August 29th, news became known of the killing of the Ulyansk paratrooper Nikolai Bushin. TV Rain reported the information about his death to his mother.⁸⁰ Bushin served in Army Unit No. 73612, which was permanently based in Ulyanovsk, and was the deputy commander of the 4th Platoon of the 4th Company of the 31st Separate Guards Assault Brigade of the Airborne Troops. The supposed date of Bushin's death was August 26th, 2014. His fellow servicemen who initiated a collection of funds for Nikolai's relatives wrote on the social network VKontakte that he had died "defending the border of our Motherland." It is important to note that two paratroopers who served in his division -- Ruslan Akhmetov and Arseny Ilmitov -- had been taken prisoner by Ukrainian forces on the day before.

The publication RBC.ru also gathered additional information about Russian military killed in Ukrainian territory.⁸¹ The majority of those killed served in five units of the Airborne Troops which make up the Russian Federation Peacekeeping Corps, which numbers 5,000 soldiers in total.



Families of soldiers killed in 2014 received large monetary compensation and signed non-disclosure agreements

Here is confirmation of the information on those killed:

31st Separate Guards Airborne Assault Brigade based in Ulyanovsk Region -- two contractors, Ilnur Kilchinbayev from the village of Almyasovo and Aleksandr Belozarov from the village of Novaya Mayna. According to the information from relatives, they went for training to Rostov Region and were killed on August 25.

98th Guards Airborne Division, based in Ivanovo and Kostroma Regions -- contractors Sergei Seleznev (buried September 2nd in Vladimir) and Andrei Pilipchuk from Kostroma Region were killed. The administration of the Kostroma cemetery told RBC about the funerals of three Kostroma soldiers who were killed "in Ukraine" -- Sergei Gerasimov, 26, Aleksey Kasyanov, 32, and Yevteny Kameney, 27, were killed August 24th, August 25th, and September 3rd, respectively.

76th Guards Airborne Assault Division, based in Pskov Region. Besides Leonid Kichatkin and Aleksandr Osipov about whom Shlossberg had reported, RBC wrote about the killing of Anton Korolenko (Voronez), Dmitry Ganin (Orenburg) and Maksim Mezentsev (Komi).

7th Guards Airborne Assault Division, Novorosiysk - Chita resident Nikolai Sharaborin was killed.

106th Guards Division of the Airborne Troops, based in the Ryazan Region -- a paratrooper named Maksutov was killed.

Losses in the Donbass were also suffered by the motorized brigades: the 21st from Orenburg Region; the 9th from Nizhny Novgorod; and the 17th and 18th from Chechnya. Local media wrote about how the motorized brigade soldiers Vadim Larionov, Konstantin Kuzmin, Marsel Araptanov, Vasily Karavayev, Armen Davoyan and Aleksandr Voronov were killed either "on the border with Ukraine" or during training in the Rostov Region.



Photo: The bodies of Russian citizens killed in Donbass return to the Motherland in trucks marked "Cargo 200."
Photo by Maria Turchenkova

The newspaper Aif-Prikamye⁸² reported the funeral of the drafted soldier Vasily Karavayev. He was brought to the village of Kuva in Kudymkarsk District on September 5. Several days before that, a post appeared on a social network from Nadezha Otinova, who said that her cousin, 20-year-old Vasily Karavayev, was wounded during the bombing of Donetsk on August 21st, and that he died five days later in a hospital in the Rostov Region.

Ella Polyakova and Sergei Krivenko, two members of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, announced the deaths of Russian servicemen in the Donbass -- according to their information, more than 100 members of the military were killed there.⁸³ These were Russian paratroopers who fell under fire on August 13th near the city of Snezhnoye in the Donetsk Region.

Lev Shlossberg sent a deputies' inquiry on September 16, 2014 to the Main Military Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation in which he asked questions about the fate of the servicemen of the 76th Pskov Division of the Airborne Troops. In his inquiry, Shlossberg named 12 cases of paratroopers for whom the facts of their deaths and burials were established precisely, but not the reasons or circumstances.

These were servicemen from various units related to the 76h Pskov Division of the Airborne Troops: Aleksandr Baranov, Sergei Volkov, Dmitry Ganin, Vasily Gerasimchuk, Aleksey Karpenko, Tleuzhan Kinibayev, Leonid Kichatkin, Anton Korolenko, Aleksandr Kulikov, Maskim Mezentsev, Aleksandr Osipov, and Ivan Sokol.⁸⁴ In reply, the Main Military Prosecutor's Office reported⁸⁵ to Shlossberg that the circumstances of the death of the servicemen were established, they were killed outside of the place of permanent deployment, and that no violations of the law by the military prosecutor's agencies were found. The response further stated that the families of those killed had received social benefits, and that the disclosure of other requested information was impossible, since it constituted a state secret.

On January 27, 2015, Boris Nemtsov addressed an official inquiry to the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation.

He demanded that information about the killing of Russian Federation servicemen in the territory of Ukraine be investigated. Exactly one month later Boris Nemtsov was murdered, and the Prosecutor General never answered Nemtsov's inquiry.

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RPR-PARNAS

No. 25/OS
January 27, 2015

To:
Yu.Ya. Chaika
RF Prosecutor General
125993, GSP-3, Moscow
ul. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, d. 15a

Dear Yury Yakovlevich!

In the last six months, in various media, there have appeared reports about the participation in combat actions on the territory of Ukraine

Chapter 7

Vladimir Putin's Army Depot



Speaking to journalists on March 4th, 2014, Vladimir Putin denied the involvement of military from Russia in the blockading of Ukrainian units in the territory of the Crimean peninsula. According to the president, these actions were carried out exclusively by "local self-defense forces," and the reason that the uniform of the armed people looked like a Russian uniform was because such uniforms were freely sold in stores. Such uniforms, according to Putin, could be purchased in any army depot.⁸⁶

A year later, on the eve of the referendum on the annexation of the Crimean peninsula to the Russian Federation, the Russian president publicly rebutted his own words and confirmed the participation of Russian military in the blockading of Crimean military facilities.⁸⁷ However, the aphorism about "Putin's army depot" continued to remain relevant to this day given that in the spring of 2014, Russian arms and equipment began to pour into Ukraine in massive amounts, and was actively used against the Ukrainian forces.

Today, the so-called "Donbass militia" has a wide assortment of arms, including tanks, self-propelled artillery systems, multiple launch rocket systems and a variety of firearms. Russian officials deny the fact of the delivery of military equipment to Donbass. The separatist leaders state that the arms and military equipment of the so-called "militia" is trophy seized in battle from the Ukrainian Army.⁸⁸ But the testimonies collected refute these statements.

The identification of arms and equipment, which flows to the separatists' armaments from units of the Russian Federation army is complicated by the fact that both the Russian and Ukrainian army mainly use the old Soviet weapons and military equipment. The change of the markings and numbers often eliminate the possibility of proving that the arms belong to the Russian Armed Forces. But even despite this, the proof of the sending of Russian arms to the Donbass is more than sufficient.

In the protocol attached to the Minsk peace agreement of September 19, 2014, signed by members of the Contact Group, which included Amb. Mikhail Zurabov, Russia's envoy to Kiev, there is a provision that signatories "withdraw from the line of contact of the sides artillery systems of a caliber higher than 100 mm to the distance of their maximum firing range, in particular: Tornado-G -- 40 km, Tornado-U MRLS [Multiple Launch Rocket Systems] -- 70 km, Tornado-S MRLS -- 120 km.⁸⁹

The so-called «Donbass militia» has a wide assortment of arms, including tanks, self-propelled artillery systems, and multiple launch rocket systems.

The mention of the Tornado-S appeared in the second Minsk agreements, which, as is known, were worked out as a result of overnight negotiations by the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia. The Minsk-2 agreements stipulate in particular "the withdrawal of all heavy armaments by both sides to equal distances for the purposes of creating a safe zone of a width of a minimum of 50 km from each other for 100-mm and larger artillery systems, a safe zone of a width of 70 km for MLRS and a 140-km-wide zone for the Tornado-S MLRS."⁹⁰

In signing these documents, representatives of the Russian government essentially officially acknowledged the fact of sending military armor into Ukrainian territory. The issue here is that the unified volley-fire system of the Tornado (the letters "G," "S," and "U" indicate that a specific modification has a caliber corresponding to the MLRS -- the Grad, Smerch, and Uragan) are designed in Russia and are not delivered to any other foreign state. Furthermore, according to open sources, in 2012, only the MLRS Tornado G was accepted into the armament of the Russian Army. The Tornado-S mentioned in the second Minsk agreements likely exists only in the form of experimental designs. And this weapon not only ended up in the hands of the separatists, but was also incorporated into an international agreement concluded by Vladimir Putin.



Photo: Russian-manufactured Tornado volley-fire system. Photo: <http://smitsmitty.livejournal.com>



Photo: Russian T-72B3 tank seized by the Ukrainian military from the separatists. <http://smitsmitty.livejournal.com>

At the same time, the nature and intensity of combat do not allow for another option except for constant supplying of the "separatists forces" with ammunition from Russian territory. Igor Girkin, the former "defense minister" of the self-proclaimed DPR stated that in February, during the completion of the Debaltsevo operation, one of the "fire divisions" of the separatists used up about 150 tons of ammunition a day.⁹¹ To transport such a volume requires approximately 50 trucks. This is confirmed by the standards for expenditures of ammunition. For example, one Grad system fires 36 rockets, each of which weighs 56.5 kilograms. Thus, one common weight of ammunition for one volley consists of more than 2 tons. Usually one escort truck takes one-and-a-half reserve ammunitions.

It is a similar situation with the ammunition for tanks. The weight of one round for a tank is a little more than a ton. In the event of intensive combat (as took place in the area of Debaltsevo in early 2015), such a round is expended in one day.

It remains to be seen exactly how many tanks and MLRS are in the possession of the separatists. According to Aleksandr Khramchikhin, an expert at the Institute for Political and Military Analysis⁹², after the first Minsk agreements, the presence of the following arms and military equipment was recorded in the armed formations of the DPR and LPR (without taking account of losses): 83 tanks, 83 BMPs and BMDs, 68 BTRs, 33 self-propelled artillery systems, 31 towed guns, 11 MLRS, 4 SAMs [surface-to-air missiles] (3 Strela-10s, 1 Osa). From this number, according to the expert's information, 23 tanks, 56 BMPs and BMDs, 26 BTRs, 19 self-propelled artillery systems, 17 towed weapons, and 2 MLRS were seized by the separatists from the armed forces of Ukraine. Khramchikhin allows that the rest of the armaments were obtained by the fighters from Russia, but does not rule out a scenario in which the armor could be "bought" by the separatists as a result of corrupt deals with the Ukrainian side.

Despite the official rebuttals of the Kremlin, the Russian weapons are coming into the possession of the separatists

At issue is the provision of ammunition for a minimum of 80 tanks, dozens of MLRS, and two dozen self-propelled artillery systems. Even if we agree with the hypothesis that the separatists are fighting on trophy armor, and purchased the armaments from corrupt Ukrainian military, it is impossible to imagine that in the height of combat, caravans of trucks freely moved back and forth across the front line.

Numerous facts of deliveries of various types of Russian armaments to Ukrainian territory are cited in a report by ARES, the arms research services.⁹³ For example, one report cites shots from an RPG-7 anti-tank hand grenade launcher: from the markings it follows that it was manufactured at the Degtyarev Factory in Kovrov in 2001. It is also reported that an MPO-A hand flame-thrower, equipped with thermobaric rounds (fuel-air explosives) fell into the hands of the Ukrainian military. This Russian weapon was never sold to other states.

The presence in the Donbass of the T-72B3 tanks has also been proven. This most recent modernized model of a rather old tank was completed in Russia in 2013 and never exported. In particular, the



Picture: Pantsir-S1 anti-aircraft missile-and-gun system seized by the separatists in Lugansk. Screenshot from video by YouTube user parazitarium.

confirmation of the presence of a T-72B3 tank in the separatists' hands is dated August 27, 2014, when a video was published⁹⁴, in which Ukrainian soldiers demonstrate a T-72B3 tank seized near Ilovaisk and the discovery of documents in it confirming that the given tank belonged to the Russian Army.

Another piece of evidence of the presence of Russian military equipment on Ukrainian territory was a video made in the separatist-controlled city of Lugansk. In mid-February 2015, a dashboard camera recorded⁹⁵ the movement on Oboronnyaya Street of a Pantsir-S1 self-propelled surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft artillery weapon system.

This system is designed by the Russian military industry and exported to several other countries. However, apart from Russia, not a single country that has a Pantsir-SA in its arsenal borders Ukraine. It is entirely obvious that this armor could only come into the Donbass by crossing the Russian-Ukrainian border.

Thus, despite the official denials of the Kremlin, Russian weapons are coming into the possession of the separatists and are actively used against the Ukrainian Army. The deliveries of weapons to the conflict zone is not possible to view as anything other than military interference in the affairs of a neighboring state.

Chapter 8

Who Shot Down the Boeing?



On July 17th, 2014, in an area of armed conflict in the east of Ukraine, a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 (flight MH17) from Amsterdam to Kuala-Lumpur was shot down.

The crash site was in the east of Donetsk Region of Ukraine in the area of the village of Grabovo, not far from the city of Torez. All 298 people on board (283 passengers and 15 crew members) were killed.

The sudden annihilation of an airplane (with an explosive-like destruction) over a combat area made it obvious⁹⁶ in the first hours that the Boeing was shot down and did not suffer a disaster due to technical failure⁹⁷, or to a human factor (pilot or ground services error).

Statements of the Separatists

The Russian media from the very beginning of combat in the Donbass regularly reported that the separatists were successfully shooting down planes and helicopters of the Ukrainian Army. In total, from May through July 17, 2014 the following were shot down: 4 helicopters (a Mi-24 on May 2nd and 5th⁹⁸), a Mi-8 on May 29th⁹⁹, a Mi-8 on June 24th¹⁰⁰) and 3 planes (an AN-30 on June 6th¹⁰¹), an IL-76¹⁰² on June 14th, and an AN-26¹⁰³ on July 14th).

On July 17th, on the day of the Boeing 777 crash, the state news agencies ITAR-TASS and RIA Novosti reported that the "militia" had shot down an AN-26 plan near the city of Torez.¹⁰⁴ Igor Girkin (Strelkov), the defense minister of the self-proclaimed DPR in the evening of the same day reported on social networks that the "militia" shot down a plane.¹⁰⁵ Both the fighters and the Russian media name the place of the crash (the area of the city of Torez in Donetsk Region) and the time of the plane crash (about 16:00 local time) which coincides exactly with the time and place of the crash of the Malaysian Boeing 777.¹⁰⁶ All of them identify the downed plane as a Ukrainian AN-26. However, by evening, when the real picture of what had happened was clarified, such statements ceased.

Not long before the plane crash, the Kremlin media -- NTV, Rossiya-24 and others¹⁰⁷ -- informed the Russian audience that a Buk anti-aircraft system had been spotted in the possession of the Donbass fighters. Specifically, in an interview with Reuters, Aleksandr Khodakovsky, one of the separatist leaders, said this. The next day, Khodakovsky said that he had said no such thing. Reuters was forced to publish the audiotape¹⁰⁸ which confirmed the separatist's statement: fighters in the Donbass really did have the Buk complexes in their possession.

"If they believed that they had shot down a military plane, it was confusion," declared Vitaly Churkin, Russia's ambassador to the UN.

Indirectly, Vitaly Churkin, Russia's ambassador to the UN, admitted¹⁰⁹ the guilt of the terrorists for the downed Boeing. "People from the east (of Ukraine) said that they had shot down a military plane. If they believed that they had shot down a military plane, it was confusion. If it was confusion, then it was not an act of terrorism," said Churkin.

How They Hid Their Tracks

After the downing of the Boeing, Russian media began to resound with different versions of the tragedy that had happened. Essentially, the Kremlin propaganda gave the signal for a special information [intelligence] operation aimed at creating a kind of "smokescreen" around the investigation into the reasons for the crash of the Malaysian plane. The purpose of the special [intelligence] operation, judging from everything, was to cover up of the involvement in the tragedy of the separatists who were armed with the Russian anti-aircraft system.

The Kremlin's attempts to influence public opinion and intimidate the investigation have actually not prevented the reconstruction of the real reasons for the tragedy

Four days after the shooting down of MH17, Russian television's Channel One broadcast the General Staff's version of the story that the Boeing was downed by an Ukrainian battle plane, a SU-25.¹¹⁰ This hypothesis was refuted¹¹¹ by Vadim Lukashovich, an expert on the effectiveness of aviation systems: "The SU-25 is a battle plane, and the ideology of this machine is work on the ground, direct support of troops on the field of battle. To shoot down a plane at the elevation of 11,000 with an SU-25 is simply not serious...in my view that is not untenable. Furthermore, I would like to meet those eyewitnesses who saw from the ground a plane that was 15-20 meters in size, located at an elevation of 11,000 meters, and unfailingly determined its type."

Vladimir Babak, general designer of the SU-25, called the version of the story that the Malaysian Boeing 777 was downed by an SU battle plane "an attempt to hide their tracks."¹¹² According to the creator of the SU-25 plane, a battle plane could attack a Boeing at an elevation of 3,000-4,000 meters, but an SU-25 is not capable of shooting down a plane flying at an elevation of 10,500 meters.

Mikhail Leontyev, the odious Kremlin propagandist, sounded one more high-profile "version." On the program *Odnako* (However) on Channel One on November 14th, he announced¹¹³ that he had a "sensational photo" in his possession

that had supposedly been taken by a foreign spy satellite in the last seconds of the flight of the Malaysian Boeing 777 over Ukraine. This photo, in Leontyev's opinion, confirmed that the Boeing was shot down by a MiG-29 jet fighter that was following it.

Many Russian media outlets printed the photo. But the photo turned out to be a forgery. Experts discovered several signs that it was fabricated¹¹⁴: the background was made from screenshots of Google Maps from August 28th, 2012, but for the "zoom" there was a 2012 photograph from Yandex Maps. A photo of a military plane that looks like an SU-27 was used in the collage, but in Channel One's report, a MiG-29 is mentioned. The place of the incident also doesn't coincide with the real place. The Donetsk Airport can be seen in Channel One's photo, but the Boeing was shot down approximately 50 kilometers from the airport. The time indicated on the fake photo-shop from Channel One -- UTC -- is the worldwide coordinated Greenwich Mean Time. On the picture it is shown as 1:19:47, but in fact, it was night already at that time over Ukraine. However, the Malaysian Boeing 777 was shot down at 16:20 local time.

The Kremlin's attempts to influence public opinion and intimidate the investigation have actually not prevented the reconstruction of the real reasons for the tragedy.

Investigation

The countries that have lost their citizens in this tragedy are intensely interested in establishing the truth and determining who is guilty. Besides the official investigation of the circumstances of the tragedy, the European community and the media have conducted their own independent investigations, collection of evidence and questioning of eyewitnesses.

According to the information from the investigative journalists' organization CORRECTV that was broadcast in January 2015,¹¹⁵ Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 crashed as a result of fire from a Buk M1 anti-aircraft missile complex. Based on the testimony of a military expert, journalists concluded that the passenger plane could not have been shot down by a jet fighter.

With the help of analysis of photo and video documentation, questioning of witnesses and a review of the area, researchers followed the movement of the Buk-M1 from which the Boeing was shot down and came to the conclusion that the system was brought in from the Russian city of Kursk. Military personnel from the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade brought the Buk to the positions from which the plane was shot down, with the aim of defending Russian Federation tank divisions battling without identifying marks in Ukrainian territory. To the investigators' question as to who could have launched the missile from the Buk, all the experts, including former soldiers of the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade in Kursk replied that the separatists were not capable of using a Buk. "Without a doubt, the order to shoot the MH17 was given by a Russian [Federation] officer," the authors of the investigation concluded.

In March 2015, several investigative materials were immediately published which confirmed that the Boeing was shot down by a Buk from separatist-controlled territory. In particular, journalists from German TV channels WDR and TBK, and also from the newspaper *SüdDeutsche Zeitung*, spent time near the city of Snezhnoye, in the location of the presumed launch of the Buk-M1, and questioned local residents.

*The Trail over Torez*¹¹⁷

Documented confirmation of the fact that the Malaysian Boeing was shot down by a "surface-to-air" class missile launched from a Buk system located in territory under control of the separatists in Donetsk Region is provided by photos made by a resident of the city of Torez approximately 3-4 minutes after the missile launch. An inverse trail from a missile at the most early portion of its trajectory is visible in the photos.

This trail, described as a "pillar of smoke," was seen by many local residents. This is confirmed by accounts gathered by a Reuters correspondent from the residents of the village of Krasny Oktyabr, over whose heads the missile passed after it had just been launched. These testimonies¹¹⁸ are right at the site: it became possible to talk with local residents once the village was outside the zone of active combat.

Several hours after the Boeing disaster, a photo with the trail from the missile launch was posted on social networks by a local resident. The photograph was subjected to careful analysis by Bellingcat, a community of investigative journalists, the conclusions of which testify to its undisputed authenticity.^{119,120}

In fact, the key thesis placing the authenticity of the photo in doubt was refuted: this was the color of the sky in the image. The location of the plane crash where the cloud cover was recorded is about 15 kilometers from the place where the photographer was located, and the zone at which the photographer's lens was pointed was another 20 kilometers away. At such a distance, the cloud cover above the two locations (of the launch of the missile and of the plane crash) could be entirely different. All the more so because the satellite weather photograph of this part of Eastern Ukraine shows that Donetsk and its suburbs were on the edge of a large cloud front at the time, and the weather there could change rapidly.

Witnesses stated¹¹⁶ that on June 17th, they observed the launch of an anti-aircraft missile from the ground, "but they were afraid of saying that before because no one would believe them." The words of one of the eyewitnesses were as follows: "An explosion was heard from the direction of Stepanovka. Then a hissing, and then an explosion in the sky." The presumed location from which the missile was launched was plowed up.

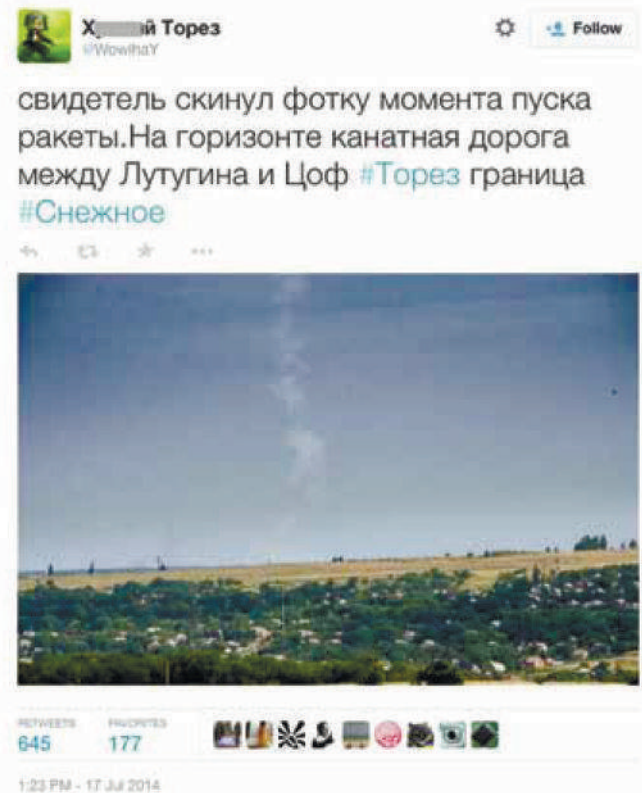


Photo: The witness took the photo at the moment of the missile launch. On the horizon is the cable-way between Lutugina and Tsof #torez border #Snezhnoye

The Russian journalist Sergei Parkhomenko managed to find the author of the above-mentioned photo and obtain the original shot from him. Upon examination of the jpg file (and further, the metadata of the NEF files in the RAW format) it became clear that there were no "spots" or "blots" on the image, as it had seemed to suspicious skeptics. All of that "trash" came about from compressing the full-dimension files to the format required for uploading photos to Twitter. The original of the photo is much brighter than the version that was published June 17th, 2014. The photo was "darkened" before publication on Twitter in order to make the streak of smoke in the middle of the scene more visible.



Photo: The original photo with the inverse trail of the missile that brought down the Boeing MH17. Published by Sergei Parkhomenko.

The pictures sent by the photographer contain sufficient details in order to reliably tie the position of the picture to a real location

The author of the photograph informed Sergei Parkhomenko the following about the circumstances of the shooting: "During the day, while I was in my own apartment in a building on the outskirts of Torez, I heard thunder, much stronger than the customary sounds of artillery firing, mortar explosions or the volleys of a Grad. I ran to the window and saw that the wind was slowing erasing a smoke trail over the horizon. My camera lay on the windowsill. I grabbed it and raced up the stairs to the roof in order to take the picture from there. I clicked the first time. I saw that directly across the scene electrical wires were visible. I twisted the zoom to the maximum and took a second photo. Then, I turned and saw that from the other direction, in the north (that is, right in the direction of Grabovo) there was a column of thick black-blue smoke. I decided that a missile had landed on some gas station or oil tank. I crawled to the other side of the roof in order to take a picture from there, where the wires and antennas didn't get in the way.

I crawled over for about three minutes -- then made the third shot. I didn't know that in the third shot there was smoke from the plane that had just crashed: I didn't see any plane. Therefore I didn't start shooting further: if I had known what event had been captured in the frame, I would have taken some more photos, of course, but I only learned a few hours later exactly what had happened. I then sent the pictures to a friend, and he uploaded them to Twitter."

In the system information contained in the photo sent by the author of the NEF files, there really was all the necessary information about the camera used: its settings and expositions and also the time of the shooting of these scenes: Photo 1 - 2014-07-17 16:25:41.50; Photo 2 — 2014-07-17 16:25:48.30; Photo 3 — 2014-07-17 16:30:06.50. This is six and then ten minutes, respectively, after the time, which was officially considered to be the moment of the crash of the Boeing MH17.

The pictures sent by the photographer also contain sufficient detail in order to reliably tie the position of the picture to a real location. In the first photo, which is taken from a wider angle, numerous such details can be distinguished.

- B. A farm in the middle of a field.
- C, D. Large trees standing alone.
- E. A dacha village in the foreground.
- F. Another dacha village somewhat further;
- H., I., J. Low-voltage electrical transmission towers
- K. Old coal mine slag-heap overgrown with trees and bushes.
- L., M., N. Large high-voltage line poles.
- P. Group of tall trees in the distance.
- Q. Roof of an industrial building.

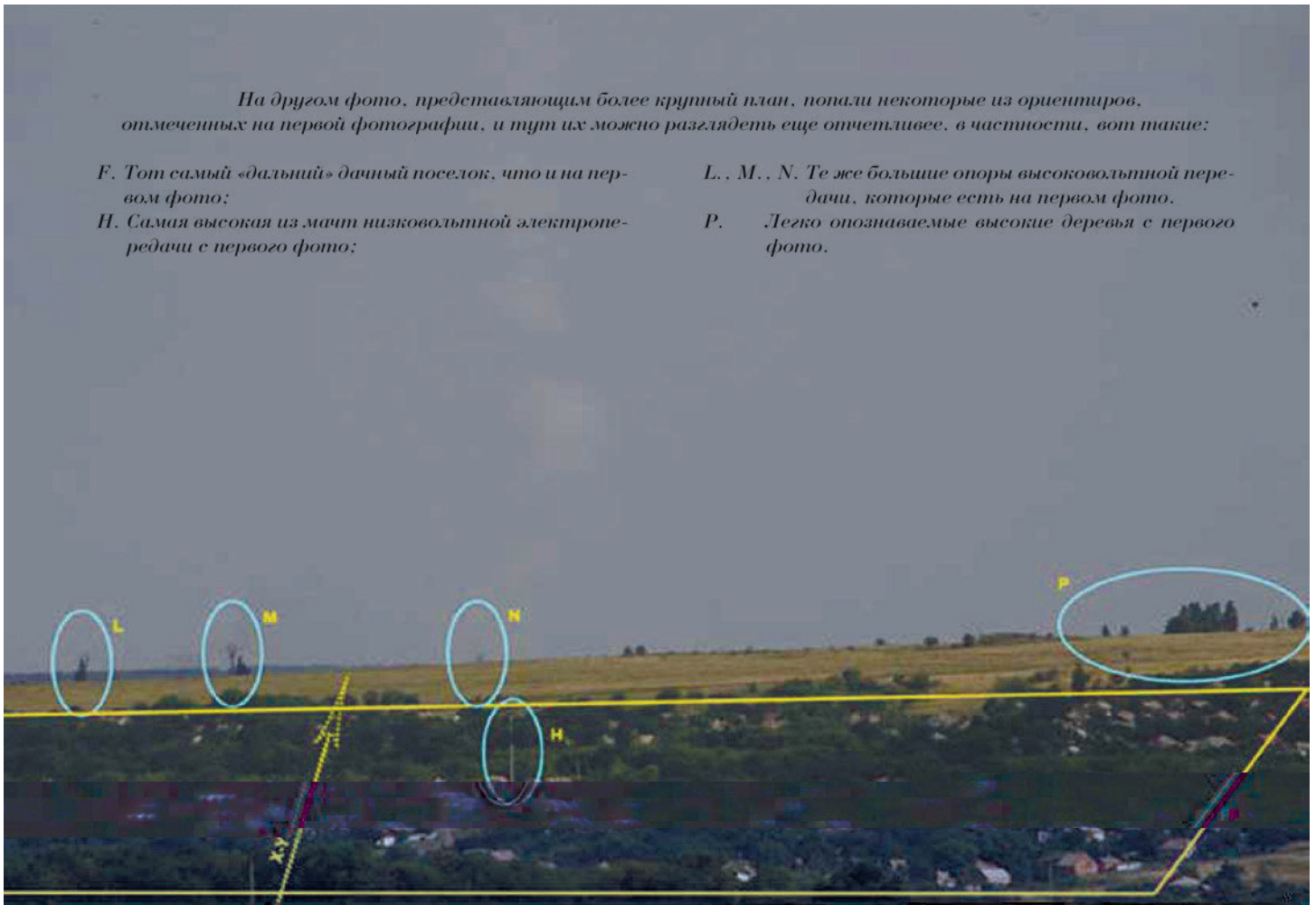
In another photo with a larger plan, several of the landmarks have been captured that are noted in the first photograph, and here they can be viewed more clearly, in particular these:

- F. The very "furthest" dacha village from the first photo.
- H. The highest of the low-voltage electrical transition towers from the first photo.
- L., M., N. The same large poles of the high-voltage transmissions that are in the first photo.
- P. Easily-recognized tall trees from the first photo.

На другом фото, представляющим более крупный план, попали некоторые из ориентиров, отмеченных на первой фотографии, и тут их можно разглядеть еще отчетливее, в частности, вот такие:

- F. Тот самый «дальний» дачный поселок, что и на первом фото;*
- H. Самая высокая из мачт низковольтной электропередачи с первого фото;*

- L., M., N. Те же большие опоры высоковольтной передачи, которые есть на первом фото.*
- P. Легко опознаваемые высокие деревья с первого фото.*



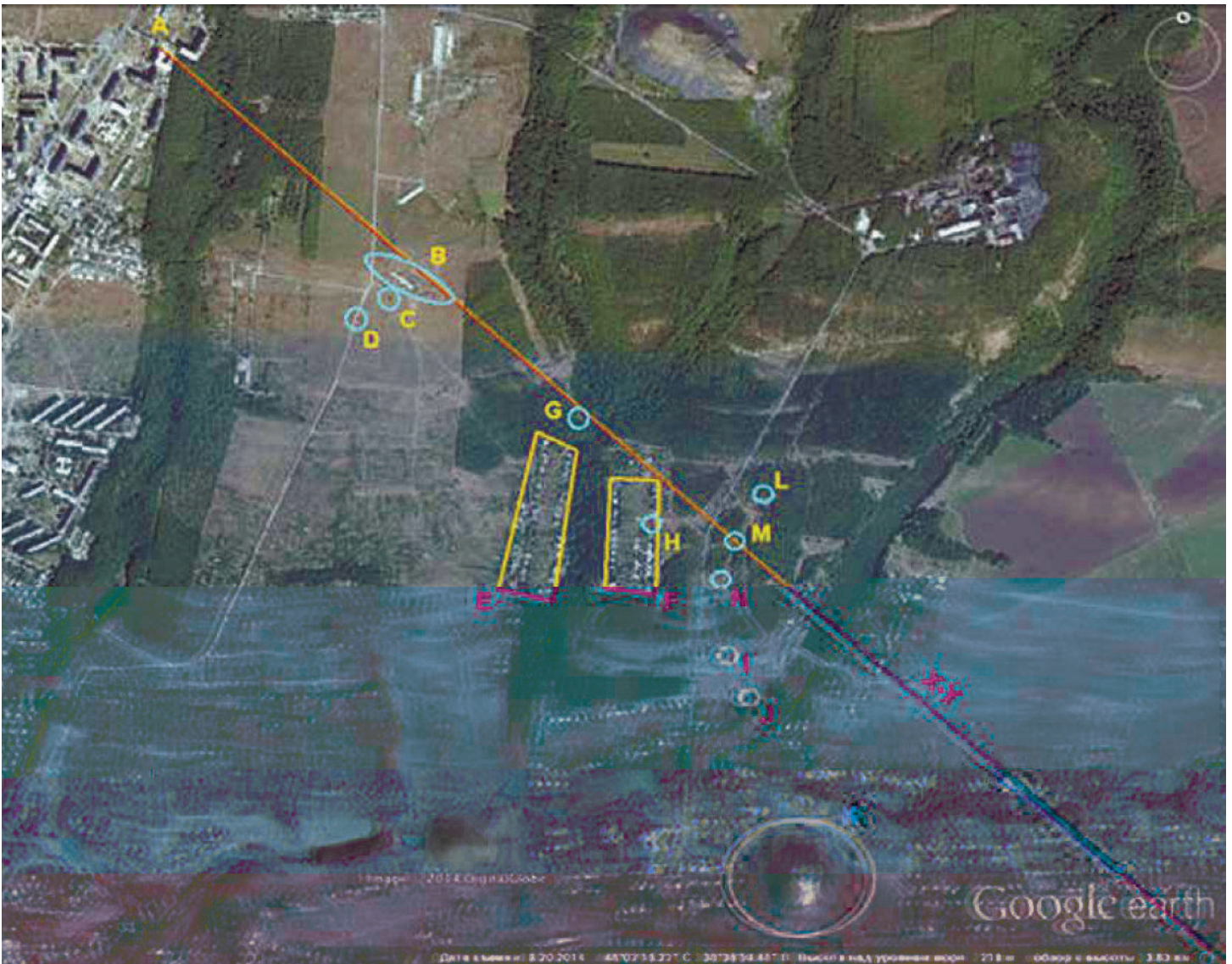


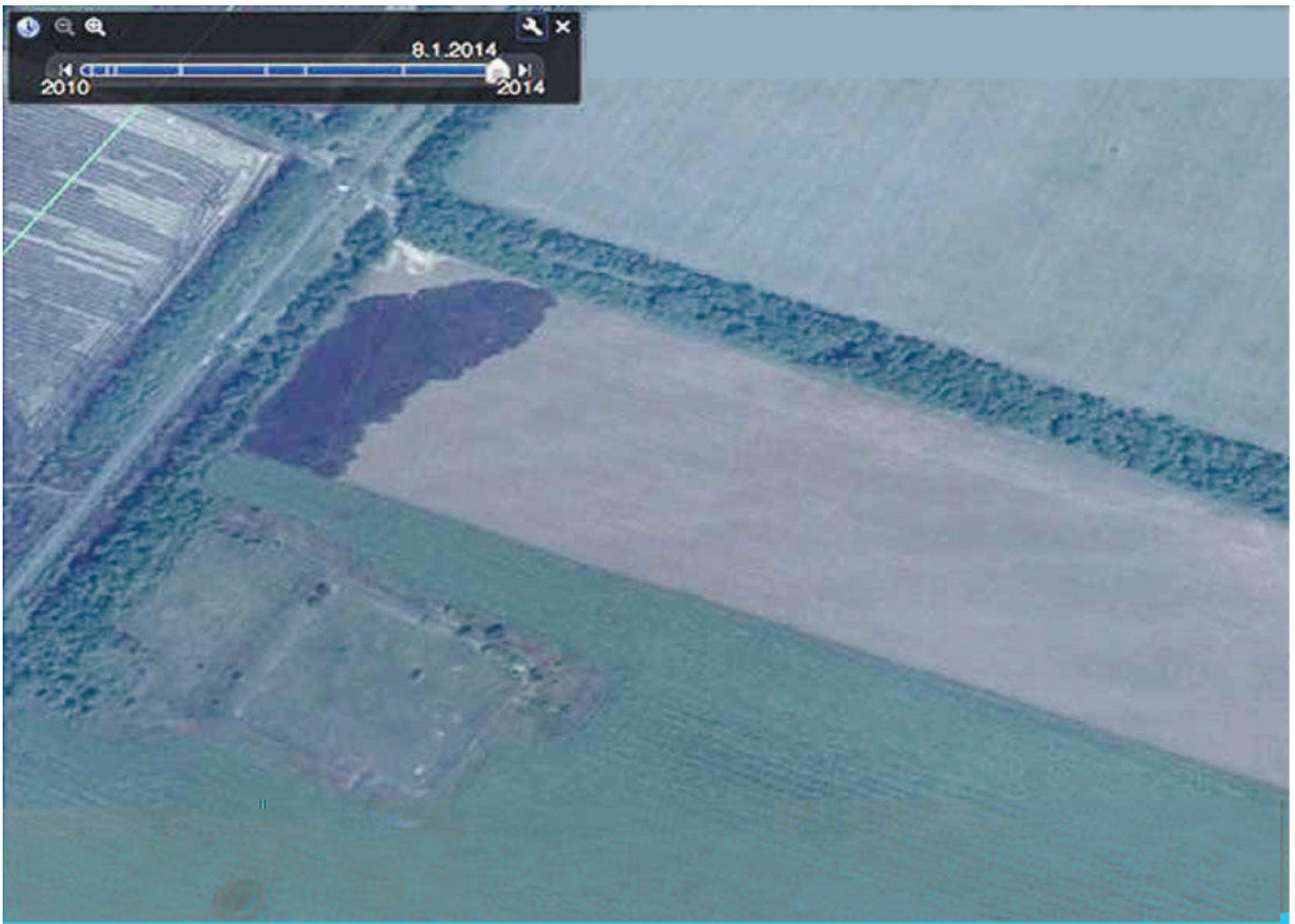
Photo: Here are some of the elements that are well-distinguished in the landscape.

The next step of analysis is the attempt to identify these characteristic details in the "top-down view," that is on the images from the satellite photos. There are a fair number of such shots in our possession, and they are made in a very good, detailed resolution and are available to users of the program Google Earth.

Here is a section of the satellite photo on which all the landmarks noted in the two photographs are clearly visible.

Point A here is marked as the starting position of the author of the photograph indicated by himself. And really, on the satellite image you can find everything that was caught by the lens: the farm, the separate trees, the two dacha villages, the line of high and low voltage electrical transmission towers, and the well-identified slag-heap. All the landmarks are marked here with the same letters that were used in the starting position photographs. This proves that the photographer indicated his location with precision.

The analysis of the photograph and maps allows calculating the point from which the rocket that hit the Boeing was launched



Thus the possibility appears to trace the imaginary "view axis" along which the photographer saw the black smoke that rose above the presumed starting point and was gradually carried by the wind to the right. In the photographs we see it approximately in the direction of the middle high-voltage electrical tower -- which we have indicated here with the letter M. This line (X-Y) can be traced on a satellite map, from the point where the photograph was taken across the tall electrical pole. For comparison, this is also indicated on the photographs with the marked landmarks. The logical conclusion is that the location from which the missile that downed the Boeing was fired is on this axis or right next to it.

There is a great degree of likelihood that the Buk system that fired the fateful shot was located in this area. This is an elongated field near the road. At the left edge are the well-marked traces from the maneuvers of some heavy armor and next to it there is a large piece of burnt, black earth, which has already been partially plowed.

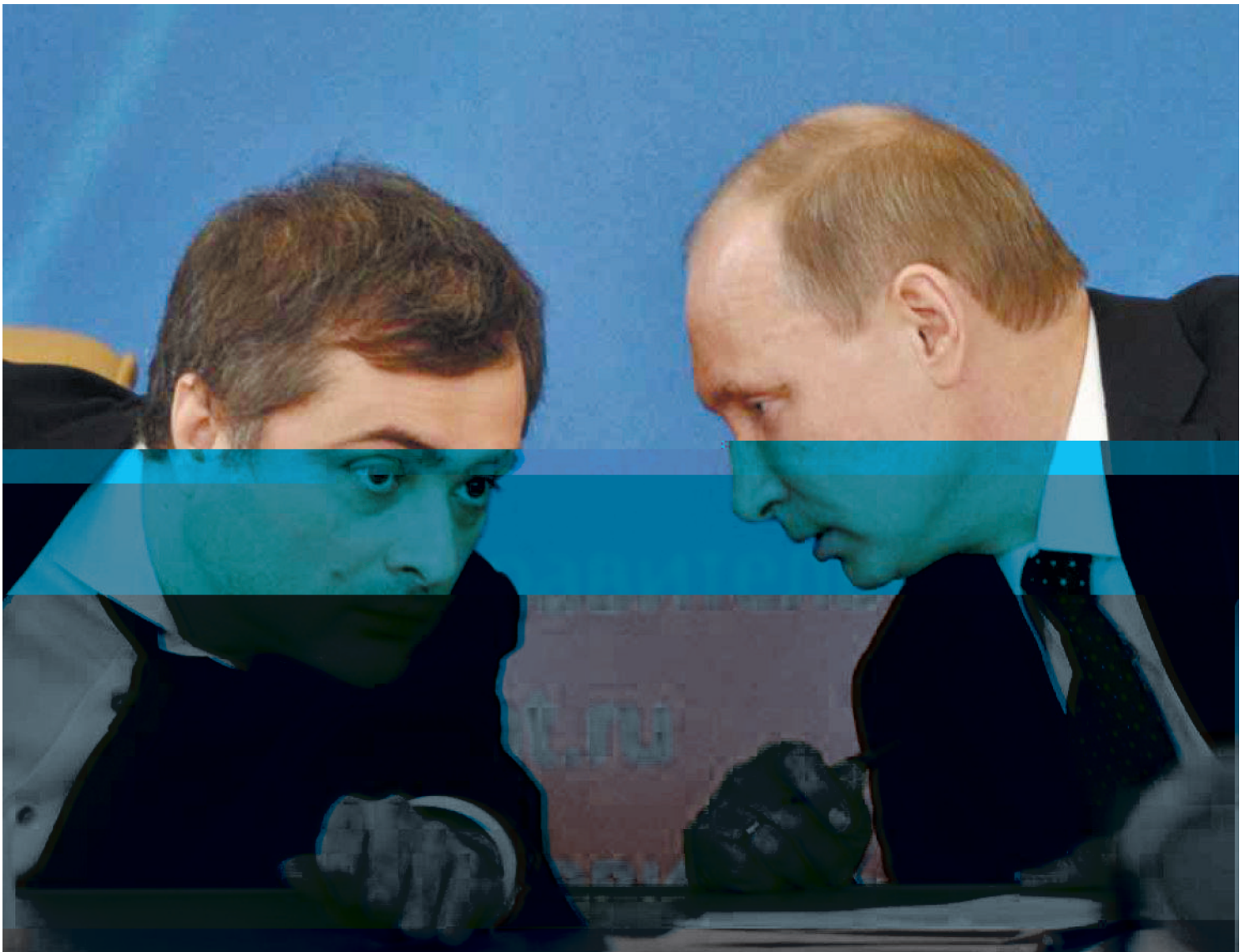
Such a location is convenient for the placement of a missile system: right across the road there is an entrance through a narrow but thick woods which hides the field from outside eyes. There is one more important detail: the road leads to the village of Snezhnoye, where in July 2014, a Buk system was photographed multiple times and recorded in a video.¹²¹

Boeing was shot down by a Buk missile complex that came from Russia and was under the control of the separatists

On March 30, 2015, the International Investigative Group, consisting of specialists from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Ukraine, conducting a criminal and legal investigation of the shooting down of Flight MH17 on July 17, 2014, made a statement¹²² that the likeliest scenario was the destruction of the Boeing by a Buk missile complex that came from Russia and was under the control of the separatists.

Chapter 9

Who Rules the Donbass?



In April 2014, the Donetsk and Lugansk “People's Republics” proclaimed their independence and announced their secession from subordination to the Ukrainian authorities. However, declared sovereignty is no more than a declaration. Essentially, the DPR and LPR are under the external management of official Moscow, and key decisions about them depend on Russian bureaucrats and political consultants. Moreover, legally, the Kremlin has not in fact acknowledged the sovereignty of the self-proclaimed republics and continues to officially recognize their territory as a part of Ukraine.

After the referendum on the independence of the DPR in May 2014, government bodies were formed within its structures. A key position in the leadership of the "Donetsk Republic" was occupied by the Muscovite Aleksandr Boroday, a citizen of Russia, who headed the DPR Council of Ministers. An analogous position in the LPR was taken by another Russian citizen -- Marat Bashirov, a political consultant who collaborated with the Russian government.

Earlier, other Russian citizens who had appeared on Ukrainian territory had played a key role in the organization of armed resistance to the local government in the Donbass. In particular, Igor Girkin (Strelkov) an officer in the reserve of Russian intelligence, who had managed to take part in the operation to annex Crimea to the Russian Federation and to create the armed forces of the separatists in the city of Slavyansk, for a time taking it under control and repelling the attacks of Ukrainian forces.

Boroday and Girkin had been acquainted for some years. Girkin in his day had headed the security service for Marshall Capital, an investment fund owned by businessman Konstantin Malofeyev.¹²³ Aleksandr Boroday worked as a consultant to this fund at the same time.

Ukrainian law-enforcement agencies consider Malofeyev to be one of the main sponsors of the fighters in the east of Ukraine. In July 2014, a criminal case was opened against him on suspicion of "creation of militarized or armed formations not stipulated by law" (Art. 260 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code).¹²⁴

Boroday and Girkin came to the Donbass in early May after the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation. In fact, Boroday never hid the fact that he regularly traveled to Moscow and coordinated his activity in the territory of Ukraine with Russian officials. On June 16th, 2014, he said outright: "I can assure you that in the Russian leadership, they absolutely understand correctly how the problems of the DPR can be resolved and are prepared to promote this at the very highest level. I also know and respect Vladislav Surkov, the aide to the president, who always provided the DPR with significant support. Without exaggeration, Surkov is our man in the Kremlin."¹²⁵

The operational decisions depend on Moscow officials and it can be confirmed by another fact. On July 18, 2014 Denis Pushilin, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the DPR, resigned from his post. Vladimir Makovich, Vice-Speaker of the “Republican Parliament”, commenting his colleague’s resignation, confirmed that Pushilin’s statement was written in Moscow.¹²⁶

Civic and political projects directly connected to the Kremlin often served as reserves of cadres for the DPR and LPR. For example, Leonid Simulnin took the post of the DPR's deputy minister of energy; he had previously worked with the pro-Kremlin organization Mestnye [Locals] and figured in the testimonies of participants of the neo-Nazi group BORN [Battle Organization of Russian Nationalists], which committed a number of high-profile murders and which is considered to have acted with the Kremlin's sanction.¹²⁷ Pavel Karpov, who had earlier collaborated with the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation as an advisor to nationalist organizations, is a member of the LPR government.¹²⁸



**Александр Юрьевич
Бородай**
Председатель совета
министров ДНР;
6 мая - 7 августа 2014.
Первый зампред совмина ДНР;
8 августа - 20 октября 2014.
Гражданин России.



**Игорь Всеволодович
Гиркин**
(Игорь Иванович Стрелков)
Министр обороны ДНР;
15 мая - 6 июля 2014.
Военный комендант Донецка;
6 июля - 17 июля 2014.
Министр обороны ДНР;
7 августа - 14 августа 2014.
Гражданин России.



**Игорь Николаевич
Безлер**
В 2014 году — командир
"Народного ополчения"
Горловки, ДНР.
Служил в Вооружённых Силах
Российской Федерации.
Гражданин России.



**Арсений "Моторола"
Павлов**
Комбат, батальон "Спарта",
ДНР.
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Самый известный волонтер.
Возит аммуницию в части
стрелковской гвардии.
Гражданин России.



**Баширов Марат
Фатович**
Тат. Марат Фоат улы Баширов.
Председатель Совета
министров ЛНР;
4 июля - 20 августа 2014 года.
Гражданин России.



Алексей Мильчаков
Командир ДШР "Русин", ЛНР.
Гражданин России.

Russian citizens -- organizers of and participants in combat against Ukraine.

Aleksandr Yuryevich Boroday
Chairman of the DPR Council of Ministers
May 6th-August 7th, 2014
First deputy chairman of the DPR Council of Ministers
August 8th-October 2014
Russian citizen

Igor Vsevolodovich Girkin
(Igor Ivanovich Strelkov)
DNR Defense Minister
May 15th - July 6th 2014
Military commandant of Donetsk
July 6th - July 17th, 2014
DPR Defense Minister
August 7th -August 14th, 2015
Russian citizen.

Igor Nikolayevich Bezler
Commander of the "People's Militia" of Horlivka, DPR, in 2014.
Served in Russian Federation Armed Forces
Russian citizen

Important testimony about the role of the Kremlin in the personnel decisions of the DPR and LPR was given by Igor Girkin, who held the post of defense minister of the so-called "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR) from May to August of 2014. He says outright that he left the leadership of the DPR as a result of pressure from the Kremlin. "I cannot say that I left voluntarily -- I was threatened that the deliveries from Russia would stop, and without the deliveries, it would be impossible to fight.

Arseny "Motorola" Pavlov
Commander of Sparta Battalion,
DPR
Russian citizen

Sergei Petrovsky
DPR intelligence
Russian citizen.

Aleksandr Zhuchkovsky
National Democratic Party, St. Petersburg
Sputnik and Pogrom author
Most famous volunteer.
Delivers ammunition to the Strelkov Guard units
Russian citizen

Marat Faatovich Bashirov
Tatar: Marat Foat uly Bashirov
Chairman of LPR Council of Ministers
July 4th - August 20th, 2014
Russian citizen

Aleksei Milchakov
Commander of the Rusich Diversionary-Assault
Reconnaissance Group, LPR
Russian citizen

At the Kremlin, a policy oriented toward peace talks prevailed, and for that they need compliant people. But I displayed no compliance and therefore didn't meet their requirements. Thus, I was forced to leave my post," Girkin stated in January of 2015.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he specified that the advisor in the Kremlin [known as the "curator" in Russian--Trans.] for personnel and political issues in the Donbass was the former deputy head of the presidential administration, Vladislav Surkov.

Aleksandr Boroday, who also left the DPR leadership in August 2014, explained his own and Girkin's resignations as follows: "I myself became a fierce advocate of Strelkov's departure from the DPR, since I realized that a period would ensue when the fragile appearance of peace would emerge and such people as Strelkov or myself would no longer be necessary. Imagine how it would look if I put my signature on the "Minsk" agreements, as a native of the city of Moscow. Such a political construction cannot exist for long. We did our duty, we helped the DPR and in the end, we left it."¹³⁰

External management from Moscow, however, did not enable the imposition of order on the territory of the self-proclaimed republics, where corruption and abuse flourish. The DNR and LNR have been shaken by major scandals tied to the distribution of humanitarian aid from Russia.

"The commanders and local residents say in unison that the convoys are stolen, in fact on enormous scales. If you collect the information together, it turns out that they have robbed a large portion -- nearly nine convoys out of ten.

Moreover, if in Donetsk and Lugansk people still got something -- approximately a package a month and only a strictly-limited number of people (people older than 70 or mothers with many children), then nothing reaches the small towns. Aleksey Mozgovoy sits in Alchevsk; they don't receive anything from the 'humanitarian convoys'; Pavel Dremov in Pervomaysk also did not get anything -- I mean that ordinary people and institutions did not receive anything. The situation is terrible, and furthermore there is evidence of the sale of humanitarian aid in the markets," said Gleb Kornilov, coordinator of Fund to Help Donbass.¹³¹

Furthermore, cases of "people's courts" have been recorded in the LPR which operate outside -- even a dubious -- but at least some kind of field of due process in which officials courts work. Back in the fall of 2014, it became known that in the city of Alchevsk, approximately 300 local residents voted to sentence one rape "suspect" to the death penalty, and a second, to be sent to the front.¹³²

In January 2015, yet another testimony appeared about how the interaction of the "people's republics" with the Kremlin was in fact constructed in eastern Ukraine. Sergei Danilov, an expert of the working group to create the DNR's monetary system, held a meeting in Moscow with people who supported the independence of the Donbass: "Who will answer the question, how many towers there are in the Kremlin? It is a paradoxical situation: a working group came here, in it was Boris Litvinov, the future chairman of the DPR's Supreme Council, he met three times with Surkov and believes that this government official has the right to be in charge of Novorossiia, everyone bows down to him. We went back and we were asked the question: but did he indicate that he has authority? No, he didn't indicate that. Did he show a document that he has such formal duties in his position? No, he didn't show that. But formally, he has another sector, he is in charge of Abkhazia and South Ossetia," said Danilov. This speech was videotaped and published.¹³³

There is no doubt that it is precisely Vladislav Surkov who plays a key role in the process of the external management of the "People's Republics" carried out by the Kremlin. Formally, he is responsible for the issues of cooperation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but when he was assigned in the fall of 2013 to the post of aide to the president, it became known that Ukraine was also included among his interests. Representatives of Surkov's inner circle in particular were seen repeatedly in Kiev during the revolutionary events on the Maidan. Moreover, Valentin Nalivaychenko, head of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU), on the anniversary of the shooting of the Kiev EuroMaidan by snipers, directly accused Surkov of leading this operation.¹³⁴

The Kremlin's policy regarding the DPR and LPR is extremely closed and non-transparent. However, the facts of the direct regulation of policy of these supposedly "independent republics" is impossible to hide. In essence, it is a question of the creation of pseudo-states in the east of Ukraine that are managed from Moscow and that essentially serve as a mechanism of pressure on official Kiev.

Important evidence of Vladislav Surkov's involvement in decisions inside the DPR and LPR was publicized¹³⁵ by Andrei Kolesnikov, special correspondent for Kommersant, in describing the negotiations in Minsk on February 12th, 2015, at which Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Holland and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko were present. The harmonizing of the positions on the ceasefire in Donbass went on all through the night, although the official representatives of the "People's Republics" did not take part in them – they awaited the results outside the door.

From Andrei Kolesnikov's article in Kommersant on the day following the Minsk talks:

«It seemed a trivial matter remained: we had to get an endorsement of the "Complex of Measures" from Aleksandr Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky, leaders of the DPR and LPR, who were waiting just for that moment in the DipService Hall, where at that time the Contact Group was meeting. With that aim, Vladislav Surkov, aide to the president of Russia headed to the DipService Hall. I saw how he came out of the negotiations room and headed to the exit. At that moment it was still not clear where he was going, but it was already clear that events were beginning to unfold with growing speed...And here the president of Ukraine came out of the negotiating room...He was very dissatisfied with something.

Later we learned why: Aleksandr Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky categorically refused to put their signatures on the document. Aside from everything else, their signatures could mean their political (and not only political) death. But what can I say: all participants in the process were taking risks with this document...It was a complete collapse of the negotiations. Fourteen hours of time demonstratively wasted in vain. At 10:40, Vladislav Surkov returned from the Palace of Independence and walked up to the third floor, where Vladimir Putin was located at the time. In a little while, Francois Hollande and Angel Merkel also went upstairs. They learned about the decision of the militia leaders...So what happened there on the third floor? I was able to reconstruct these events. According to Kommersant's information, Vladimir Putin told his colleagues that they had to explain to Aleksandr Zakharchenko and Igor Plotnitsky why they were wrong. "I can not pressure them," he said several times. But then what was all this? Angela Merkel proposed explaining everything to the leaders of the DPR and LPR with reference to the meeting of the EU Council of Ministers opening in Brussels. She said that the militiamen had to be informed: they had one-and-a-half hours of time. After that time, the leaders of France and Germany would leave and never return again, and no further negotiations would be possible. The Russian leader also had to confirm this as well. So he confirmed it...Then they waited. Vladimir Putin went out and once again came into the negotiating room, with two minutes were left before the ultimatum expired. He said that he had called Vladislav Surkov and announced: 'They have signed everything.'»

Chapter 10

Humanitarian Disaster



The intervention of Putin and Russian forces in the conflict in the east of Ukraine has turned part of the territory of a neighboring state into a war zone. The Donbass in 2014-2015 features murders with impunity, hundreds of thousands of refugees, destroyed infrastructure and the collapse of the social system. The Ukrainian and Russian authorities and representatives of the international community increasingly characterize the situation in the Donbass as a humanitarian disaster.

In the course of combat in eastern Ukraine, numerous local residents were forced to leave territory controlled by the separatists as well as cities on the front line. According to the official statistics of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, between April 2014 and January 2015, more than 800,000 citizens of Ukraine moved to Russia.¹³⁶ According to local authorities, as a result of shelling and due to hunger, more than 900,000 residents of the Donbass were forced to flee to safer parts of Ukraine.¹³⁷ Because of the destruction suffered by cities and towns in the conflict zone, many refugees have no home to which to return.

The Ukrainian authorities estimate the scale of the damage resulting from combat in Donbass at 4.6 billion hryvnia (more than US \$200 million)¹³⁸. About 104,000 residents of the Donetsk Region are without housing, water, gas or electricity. Infrastructure facilities, electrical transmission lines, local gas lines and water lines are subjected to systematic destruction. There are regular reports of the killing of workers from repair crews trying to restore the infrastructure on territory occupied by the separatists.

Roads to safe areas for refugees in the territory of Ukraine are frequently full of deadly dangers due to the lack of humanitarian corridors. Thus, on August 18th, 2014, 15 civilians were killed as a result of the shelling of a convoy of refugees from the direction of the separatists.¹³⁹ The convoy with white flags was transporting refugees from the towns of Khryashchevatoye and Novosvetlovka. The cars were strafed by Grad and mortar fire from the separatist territory.



Photo: The Oktyabrsky District of Donetsk after clashes between separatists and the Ukrainian army.

Practically throughout the entire territory of the Donbass today there are numerous checkpoints that have been set up. However, while the checkpoints established by the Ukrainian military do admit abuses but are still regulated by the legislation of Ukraine, any oversight of the positions maintained by the separatists is essentially outside the field of law and of a united command center. This creates widespread opportunities for abuse, such as the restriction of passage for persons trying to leave the combat zone, fees levied on business people, uncontrolled violence on the part of the fighters towards civilians and forcing local residents to do hard labor.



Photo: Abuse of a Ukrainian woman, Irina Dovgan, in Donetsk
Photo: Mauricio Lima/The New York Times



Photo: Separatists' checkpoint at the entrance of Donetsk.
Photo: Yevgeny Feldman/Novaya Gazeta

Residents of population centers that have ended up under the control of the separatists are frequently subjected to violence on the part of the fighters. An illustrative example was in the city of Slavyansk. After this town's liberation by the Ukrainian forces, a mass grave of local residents was discovered there as were signs of torture and abuse on the bodies.¹⁴⁰ In just the first days of the seizure of Slavyansk and Horlivka, situated nearby, the body of Vladimir Rybak, a local deputy, was found in the river. He had been detained by militants from the detachment of Igor Bezler, an officer of Russian Federation intelligence. Rybak was tortured and murdered, and his body was thrown in the creek.¹⁴¹

The separatists in the east of Ukraine widely employ the tactic of firing from heavily populated areas

There are many cases in which the separatists detained, tortured and abused civilians who were not taking part in the armed conflict. Thus, on August 29th, 2014, Irina Dovgan, a citizen of Ukraine, was released after being arrested by fighters from the separatist Vostok Battalion. Dovgan was accused of supporting the Ukrainian authorities, tied to a pillar in the center of Donetsk, and publicly humiliated and beaten.

The separatists in the east of Ukraine widely employ the tactic of firing from heavily populated areas and residential neighborhoods. By placing firing areas in residential buildings, the separatists provoke fire on civilians. Proof of such actions has been broadcast on Russian television. For example, in October 2014, there was a report on Channel One,¹⁴² in which a DPR fighter used a grenade-launcher to fire from the window of a multi-story apartment building toward the positions of the Ukrainian Army. In the next scene, a journalist asks an elderly woman who has come out on the stairway landing whether she is afraid to live there.

Public transit also falls under fire from the militants. Thus, on January 13th, 2015, a Ukrainian checkpoint at the entrance to the city of Volnovakha was fired on from the direction of Donetsk. Grad missiles were fired from territory controlled by the separatists. A commuter bus with civilians fell under that fire and as a result 12 people were killed.¹⁴³

The hunger and dramatic impoverishment of the population of the Donbass have also become realities. This was particularly acute in the winter of 2014-2015. Journalist Yekaterina Sergatskovaya managed to document accounts of deaths due to hunger.¹⁴⁴



Photo: Bus shelled by separatists near Volnovakha

Sergei K., a volunteer and organizer of free cafeterias for the poor who was recently forced to flee Donetsk, reported that 7 people died of hunger in Kirovskoye; in Snezhnoye, 5 people, and in Krasny Partizansk in Lugansk Region, 68 people. According to observations from locals, the bodies of those who have died are transported to the city on sleds, because there isn't any other means of transporting dead bodies. Those who have died of dystrophy are recorded as having died of a heart attack. This is indirectly confirmed, in fact, by reports by Igor Girkin (Strelkov), the former "DPR defense minister." For example, he writes: "In Donetsk and Lugansk Republics there is a lot of food. But the old and disabled people (and not only them) don't have any money at all to buy it. Unfortunately, the authorities could care less about this; otherwise, they would have long ago organized the distribution of food by ration cards. It is incomprehensible that people would die from hunger with the stores filled with provisions. Today I was told that in Donetsk, the number of officially registered deaths from dystrophy has exceeded 20 persons. They say that in Lugansk Region, things are no better."

The authorities of the so-called DPR and LPR have not managed to organize a fair distribution of humanitarian aid, of which there is an acute shortage. The separatist leaders themselves admit that a significant portion of the cargo is stolen. For example, Arseny Pavlov (a Russian citizen known as "Motorola"), the famous commander of the fighters announced in February 2015 referring to the distribution of humanitarian aid that "the amount of theft is off the charts."¹⁴⁵ "Humanitarian convoys are arriving, but humanitarian aid is not reaching people," he emphasized.

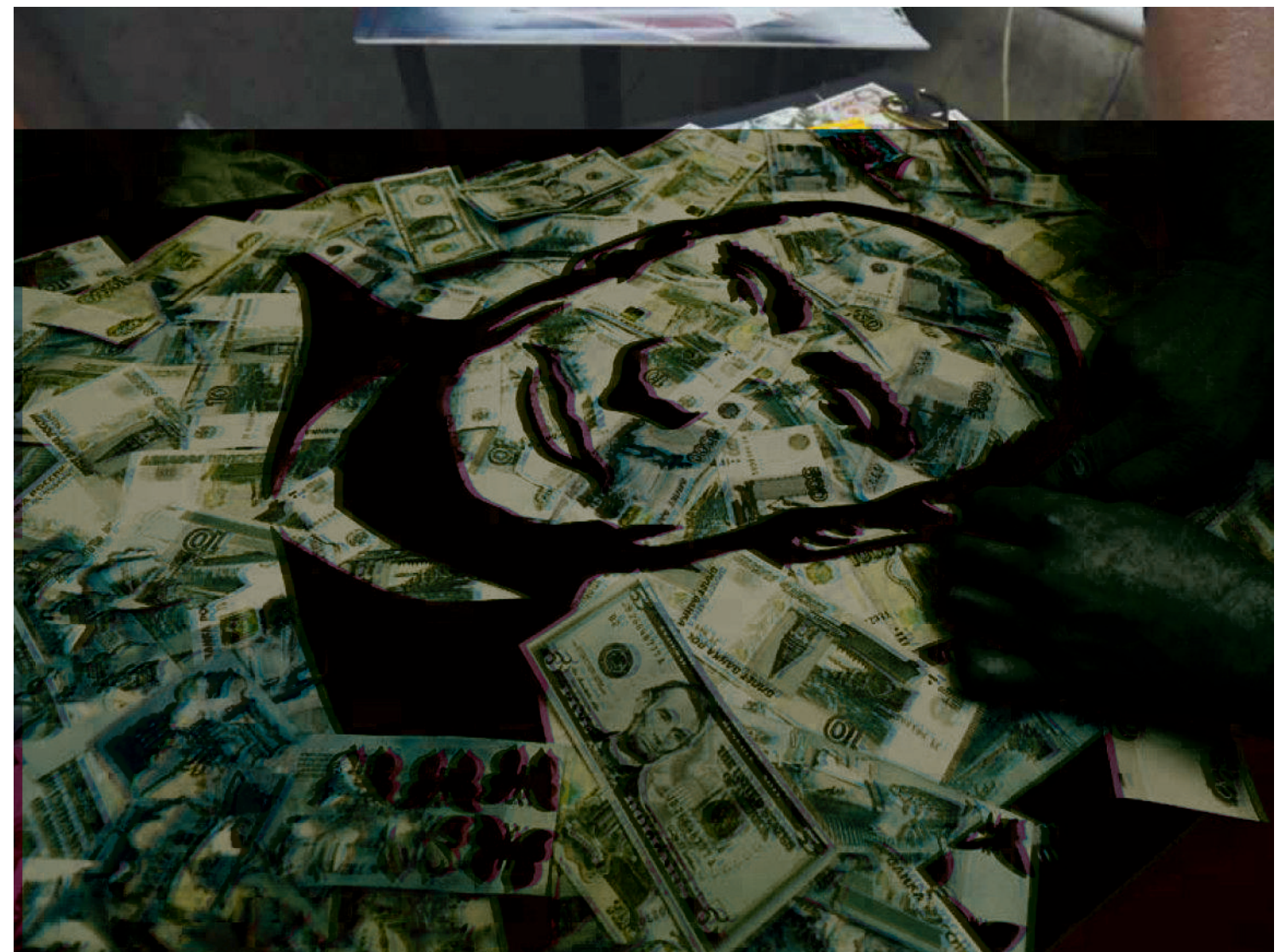
The prices found in stores located in separatist-controlled territory are markedly higher than those in the Ukrainian regions. Moreover, there are significantly fewer jobs in the Donbass. Some coalmines are still operating, including some illegal ones, as are the enterprises of the Donetsk oligarch Rinat Akhmetov.

A large part of business has left the territory of the DPR and LPR, fleeing robbery and raids. Attracting new investments into the combat zone is practically impossible.

The inability of the authorities of the self-proclaimed "republics" to provide the necessary medicines for people who are on state welfare is a grave problem. This concerns both clinics and other medical facilities. Despite this, the DPR and LPR block the evacuation of people who are unable to work, and who suffer from the shortage of medicines. For example, the LPR administration blocked an attempt by volunteers to bring the patients of the Slavyanoserbysky Psycho-Neurological Care Center out to territory controlled by the Ukrainian authorities.¹⁴⁶ These patients are not only lacking medications but are also subject to systematic shelling.

Chapter 11

How Much Does the War with Ukraine Cost?



An estimate of the cost of Putin's war campaign on Ukrainian territory requires an approach from two directions. First, it is necessary to calculate how much the direct combat operations cost Russia, operations in which Russian Federation "hybrid" forces are actively taking part (the "vacationers," the "volunteers" and the like). This is the direct cost of the war, and evidently, it will not be very great in terms of the government's scale. Second, it is important to analyze the indirect cost linked to the introduction of sanctions against Russian banks and companies, as well as the food embargo, asymmetrically introduced in response by Russia, inflation, devaluation, and the economic crisis. And that amount will be much greater.

Direct costs for those who are fighting include expenditures on their ongoing maintenance (food, housing, medical care and so on), and expenses for the ongoing maintenance and repair of armor used in the combat zone, including ammunition.

According to our estimates, the number of participants in combat in the east of Ukraine on the side of the separatists rose from 10,000-15,000 in the early summer of 2014 to 35,000 to 37,000 in the early spring of 2015; meanwhile, the number of Russian Federation military rose from 3,000-5,000 to 8,000-10,000.

Vladimir Yefimov, head of the Fund for Sverdlovsk Veterans of Special Forces,¹⁴⁷ who is involved in sending Russian [Federation] "volunteers" to the Donbass, stated that the cost of maintaining one Russian "volunteer" is 350,000 rubles per month (US \$7,039). Multiply 350,000 rubles by 6,000 volunteers for 10 months and we get a figure of 21 billion rubles (US \$422 million). Let us suppose that the monthly maintenance of the local "volunteers" costs three to four times less, we get a figure of 25 billion rubles for their maintenance for 10 months. Thus the total is 46 billion rubles (\$503 million) for 10 months of the war or 4.6 billion rubles (\$92 billion a month) of direct costs for the "volunteers."

Add to this 15% for the cost of use, repair and service of the military armor,¹⁴⁸ and for its transport from Russian Federation warehouses -- another 7

billion rubles. It must also be taken into account that all the ammunition used by the separatists is intended for outdated forms of weapons taken from warehouses and no longer produced in Russia. In the same way, we estimate that all the Russian armor destroyed or damaged in the Donbass will not be restored by repairs or by purchase of the RF Defense Ministry of additional units of military armor.

The direct costs of the RF for the war with Ukraine for 10 months are around 53 billion rubles

Thus, we have calculated the direct costs to Russia for the war in the east of Ukraine for 10 months to be 53 billion rubles (\$1 billion). On the one hand, that is not so much, if you take into account that the annual expenditures of the Russian federal budget amount to 15 trillion rubles (\$302 billion). But, on the other hand, you can compare: the cost of the state program "Development of Culture and Tourism" in 2015 was 95 billion rubles (\$1.9 billion); the program "Preservation of Nature" was 30 billion rubles (\$604 million); the program "Development of Physical Culture and Sports" was 68 billion (\$1.3 billion); the funding of two of the country's leading universities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) within the framework of the program "Development of Education" was a little more than 20 billion rubles (\$402 million) a year.

Refuges

The destruction of hundreds and thousands of residential buildings, objects of social and transport infrastructure and of industrial plants is a direct consequence of the war in the Donbass. But until combat ends, it is not possible to estimate even approximately the scale of such destruction. By the same token, it is currently impossible to know whether Russia will bear any of the costs connected to this reconstruction. This is a matter for the future.

However, any war is accompanied by the appearance of a large number of refugees -- people who cannot live with the constant risk to their lives and the lives of their children. Before the war, there were about 7 million people living in the Lugansk and Donetsk Regions of Ukraine. Statistics from the official Ukrainian and Russian authorities on the number of refugees are sharply different. According to the UN, about one million people throughout the entire territory of the conflict left by the spring of 2015.¹⁴⁹ Even so, the number of refugees has practically ceased to grow since November of last year. According to the data from UN OCHA, the number of refugees who leave for other regions of

Ukraine and to Russia are approximately equal,¹⁵⁰ that is, at the present time we can speak about the presence of approximately a half million Ukrainian refugees in various regions of Russia.

Judging from everything, a unified standard of costs for the maintenance of refugees has been established by the Kremlin for Russian governors: 800 rubles a day (\$16) (250 rubles [\$5] for food and 550 rubles [\$11] for housing). Mitin, the governor of Novgorod Region has stated this,¹⁵¹ and these same figures are contained in a decree from the government of the Volgograd Region dated July 7th, 2014, No. 325-p¹⁵². What is more, figures provided at a meeting of the working group of the Public Chamber of the Kirov Region provide the same information. This means that the maintenance of Ukrainian refugees is costing regional budgets about 12 billion rubles a month (\$241 million), and since July 2014, this amount has reached about 80 billion rubles (\$1.6 billion).

Crimea

If the cost of restoring Donbass is still not known, and it is not clear who will finance it, the Russian authorities have already made a decision regarding the annexation of the Crimean peninsula to the Russian Federation: the main costs will be borne by the federal budget through the cutting of expenditures on other line items (above all, allocations for the development of the Russian regions).

On August 11th, 2014, the government of Russia approved a federal targeted program entitled "Social-Economic Development of the Republic of Crimea and City of Sevastopol through 2020." Its implementation will enable the raising of the living stand of the population and the development of the economy in Crimea up to the average Russian level. The cost of the funding of this program is 681,221,180,000 rubles, of which 658, 135, 800,000 rubles will be allocated from the federal budget.¹⁵³

On March 31st, 2014, President Putin signed a Decree on Raising Pensions of Crimean Pensioners to the Median Russian Level.¹⁵⁴ There are a total of 677,000 pensioners in the Crimea. Before the annexation to Russia, the amount of their pensions (converted) was 5,504 rubles (\$110) per month; in mid-2014, the amount of the pensions in Crimean was 10,670 rubles (\$215), and in Sevastopol, 11,680 rubles (\$235). The funding of the Crimean pensions is made at the expense of Russia's Pension Fund. In 2014, about 60 billion rubles (\$1.2 billion) went to cover them, and in 2015 (after the February

indexation of pensions), about 100 billion rubles (\$2 billion) will be spent from the Pension Fund of Russia.

As a result of the pension reform of 2013, the determination of the amounts of payments to Russian pensioners has been converted to a point system. This means that an individual pension now depends not on those pension contributions that were made by the pensioner during his work life, but rather on the total number of pensioners who will receive pensions. Since the Crimean pensioners made their contributions to the Ukrainian pension system, obviously the payment of their pensions will be made possible by reducing the pensions paid to Russian pensioners.

There are a few expenditures in the government program that must be financed by so-called extra-budgetary sources. However, there are no illusions here: these costs will be compensated out of the pockets of Russian citizens. Thus, for example, Tekhpromeksport, the subsidiary of the Rostech state corporation headed by Sergei Chemezov, a friend of Putin's even since the Soviet era, must finance the construction of heating electrical stations in the Crimea. Of course this will not be done as charity -- all investments in the construction of these stations and the corresponding revenue will be returned by a tariff on energy¹⁵⁵ levied by the government of Russia on consumers in the European part of Russia and in the Urals. These payments total about 20 billion rubles a year (\$403 million).

Inflation

As a result of the Kremlin's foreign policy, Western sanctions were imposed on Russian officials, businessmen and companies supporting the operation in Crimea. It is hard to estimate the damage of such measures as, for example, the ban on the delivery of equipment and parts for military production. But obviously, this will deter the production of domestic plants and will subsequently lower Russians' wages; it will lead to a reduction in the quality and technical level of production, which raises the expenditures for its use and requires large expenditures from the budget.

The personal sanctions against Putin's friends have led to a freezing of their assets. But they have found opportunities to compensate their losses. Some of them have done so with new contracts (for example, Arkady Rotenberg's company received a contract to build the Kerch Strait Bridge valued at more than 240 billion rubles). Some have done so through an administrative division of the market (for example, by decree of St. Petersburg Governor G. Poltavchenko, the accounts of a number of municipal companies will be transferred to the Rossiya Bank, the main shareholder of which is Yury Kovalchuk, Putin's friend from the Ozero Cooperative. This same bank was handed a contract for the organization of accounts on the wholesale electric power market. By decision of the government, the banks of Putin's friends who were placed under sanctions will receive tens of billions of rubles from the National Welfare Fund, although they do not meet the criteria for selection by banks, approved by the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank (the Bank of Russia).

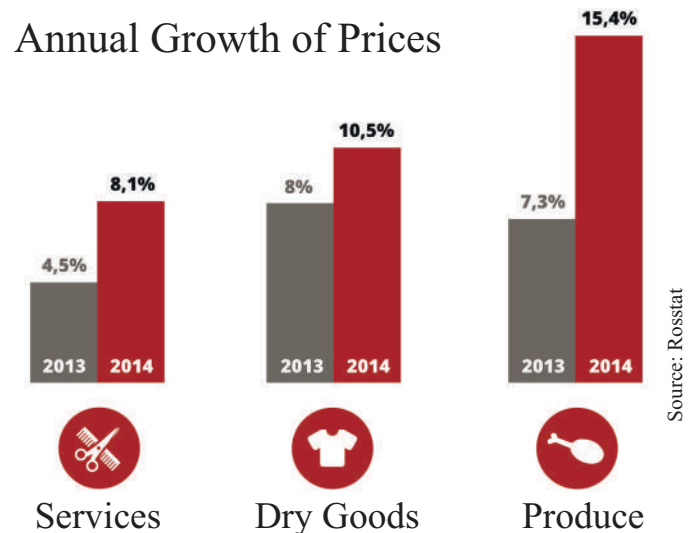
The financial sanctions had the most severe effect on our economy: the ban on US and EU companies from offering loans, lines of credit, and purchases of shares and bonds to or from Russian banks and organizations controlled by the government. As a result, in order to pay the external debts to Russian creditors, the Central Bank had to raise the demand for foreign currency on the domestic mark in the fall of 2014, which led to both a crash of the ruble rate and a surge in inflation.

In fact, runaway inflation began earlier, when Putin, by a decree on August 6th, 2014, banned the import of agricultural goods, raw materials and food from the EU, US, Australia, Canada and Norway. This provoked a reduction of offer on the market and a rise in prices.

Russia has enormous reserves of productive land, but our agriculture cannot feed our population. In 2013, 70% of fruit and berries on the Russian market were imported; 41% of the beef; 28% of the pork; 23% of the dairy products. As a result of Putin's decision in the third quarter of 2014, the importation of dairy and meat products into the RF fell by 26%, and of fish to 48% as compared to 2013. According to the estimates of the Institute of Strategic Analysis of the Anti-Corruption Fund, due to the rise in prices provoked by the ban, about 147 billion rubles are being taken from Russians' wallets this year—that's about 1,000 rubles from each resident of our country.

In 2013, consumer inflation in Russia was 6.5%. In the 12 months since the annexation of the Crimea, it has accelerated to 17%, lowering the incomes and savings of Russians by 11.5%. According to the estimates of the Bank of Russia, almost 80% of this acceleration is related to the devaluation of the ruble, and 20% to the ban on the import of food. Understandably, the devaluation of the ruble was influenced not only by the sanctions but also by the fall in the price of oil. The distribution of deposits of these two factors is 1:2, that is, due to the imposition of sanctions, inflation in Russia accelerated by 3%.

Thus, the cost for Russian citizens of the confrontation with Ukraine has been an additional 5.5% rise in prices in the year since the annexation of Crimea. This 5.5% of inflation means that Russians have lost approximately 2 trillion rubles (\$40 billion) of their wages and approximately 750 million rubles (\$15 million) of their savings.



Conclusion



The war in eastern Ukraine is often called a "hybrid" war. That is so to say the unique invention of Vladimir Putin: not a direct military aggression, but the creation of armed conflict on the territory of a neighboring state in such a way so that formally its initiator cannot be faulted. The Donbass is in flames, and the Russian president appears all in white and says: "What is your evidence?"

Dorzhi Batomunkuev, a Russian tanker from Buryatia, wounded in Debaltsevo, explains in a simple language the essence of what is happening: "Putin is a very sly man. 'There are no forces here,' he tells the whole world. But to us, he says quickly, go, go."

Let us draw conclusions. "Hybrid war," in Putin's implementation is:

Hypocrisy. We are apparently fighting with Ukraine, and everyone knows that. There are training camps for fighters operating in Russian territory, convoys with tanks move toward the Ukrainian borders, the leaders of the separatists get approval for their actions in the Kremlin. But supposedly we're not fighting. Putin confidently shakes his head in reply to direct questions, and Amb. Churkin at the UN Security Council angrily denies all accusation of the Kremlin.

Lying. Were Russian paratroopers caught in Ukrainian territory? Well, they just lost their way. Is it proven that the separatists are using Russian weaponry? They probably bought it at the army depot. Ukrainians are fired on from Russian territory? But they're bombing themselves. They are naming the last names of Russian soldiers who were killed in eastern Ukraine? Oh, that's it.

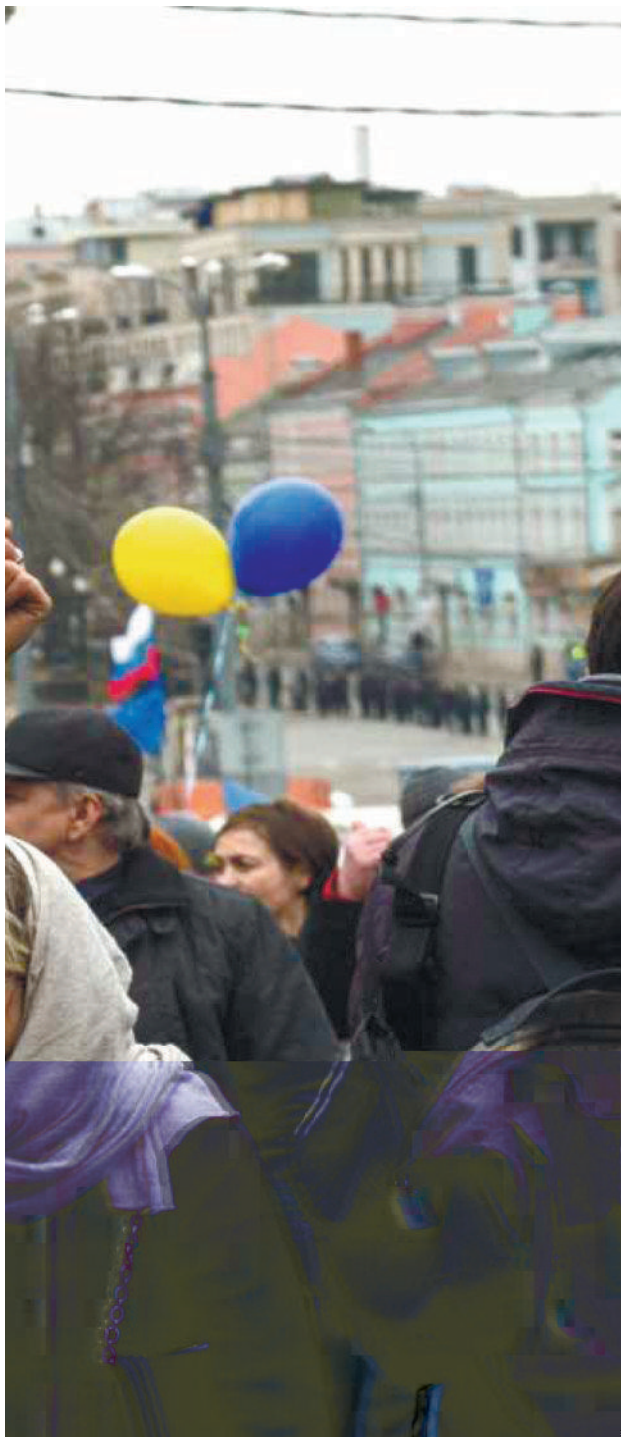
Cowardice. Neither Putin nor his generals have had the courage to admit the fact of military aggression against Ukraine. Craven lying and hypocrisy are served up as great political wisdom.

The cowardly and despicable war unleashed by Putin will cost the country a lot. We will be paying for this adventure with the lives of our soldiers, economic crisis and political isolation.

We will pay with enmity from our long-time allies. No people are closer and more like kin to the Russians than the Ukrainians. These are our brothers - - without any pathos -- and the war between Russians and Ukrainians in Donbass is impossible to characterize in any other way except as fratricide.

This war is the shame of our country. But the problem will not go away by itself. Putin must be stopped. And this can only be done by the Russian people themselves.

Let us stop this war together.



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**FREE
RUSSIA**



The report has been translated into English with the support of Free Russia Foundation.

Truth will eventually win

The majority of Russians have limited access to independent media. Most people are totally brain-washed by the tireless state propaganda machine. Their view of the world is being created by the Kremlin and both past and current events are being interpreted the way the Kremlin wishes. If you ask an ordinary Russian if we are in a war with Ukraine, he won't understand it. In his or her mind we are liberating our Ukrainian brothers from the Nazi regime in Kiev installed by Americans. We are on a sacred mission. We are a great nation. At least that is what they have come to believe.

The authors of the report "Putin. War" made a very brave and created a very urgently needed piece of modern history. They completed what Boris Nemtsov had envisioned and began to build the case of what you read in this report – Putin's Russia direct engagement of military action in the East of Ukraine. On February 27, 2015 he was assassinated near the Kremlin; a murder that was meant to send a message to anyone who disagrees with the regime. His murderers underestimated the spirit of his fellow colleagues who decided to finish his last project. Having the killers' system of values and principles it's natural to believe that it's easy to frighten people, manipulate and suppress them. They can imprison or kill their opponents, but that can't kill the desire for freedom, dignity, respect for human values, and the truth.

This report, "Putin. War," is a worthy monument for Boris Efimovich, our colleague and friend. As Vladimir Kara-Murza poignantly offered in one of his tributes to Nemtsov: "He was the best president Russia never had." We can't bring him back, but we can keep fighting for his and our goal of a free, democratic and successful Russia.

The authors of the report wrote in the conclusion: "This war is the shame of our country. But the problem will not go away by itself. Putin must be stopped... Let us stop this war together." They also said their main goal is to tell people the truth. We agree - it's imperative that as many Russian people as possible learn this bitter truth about Russia's direct involvement in a war against Ukraine. They can do it by reading this report based on materials from Boris Nemtsov. And we hope they will read the other numerous reports and articles dismantling the Kremlin's propaganda.

We also believe it's very important that the international community knows the entire depth of Putin's lying. Unfortunately, it's not only exclusively the problem of Russians who are inside Russia. The Kremlin has unleashed an aggression, a war, against our closest fraternal country; the Kremlin has unleashed a large-scale global Information War; and the Kremlin forces those to leave Russia who don't support its imperialistic and nationalistic policy.

We are pro-democracy Russians, who have to live abroad now; but we love our country and we want positive changes in our motherland. It's our contribution to the democratic cause for Russia – to translate this report into English and publish it. The truth is the unifying value for all of us: Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Lithuanians, Poles, and all other people who received an inborn trauma of our common tragic history. Together we are stronger. Let's stop this war together!

Natalia Arno,
President of Free Russia Foundation
May 25, 2015