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SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

Vitaliy Portnykov | Notes for January

WAITING FOR HELP



The first month of the new year has shown how much Ukraine needs the help of the civilized world in its confrontation with the Russian Federation, and how difficult it is for democracies to make decisions when dictatorships make them in a matter of days.

Even now, we do not know what conclusion the congressmen will come to, whether they will find an opportunity to build a compromise that will address changes in migration policy and the allocation of aid to Ukraine and Israel. But, given that the United States has entered an election period, I suspect that the main differences between Republicans and Democrats are not related to migration legislation, but rather to the unwillingness of Republicans to vote for aid to Ukraine.

And it's probably not about demands that the Joe Biden administration outline a victory strategy and more closely monitor the use of American aid to Ukraine – although these are valid comments and suggestions.

It's primarily about the undeniable influence that former President Donald Trump has on the decisions of Republican congressmen. And with each passing day of the election campaign, when it becomes clear that the Republican nomination is literally in Trump's pocket, this influence is becoming more serious. We can say that it is becoming decisive.

Of course, we cannot know who will win the presidential election this November. However, we would like to at least understand what the winner will do to resolve the situation with Russia's war with Ukraine.

We can confidently say that if President Biden is re-elected for another term, he will continue his policy of helping Ukraine. But the question is: how will this policy be viewed in Congress? After all, we already see that

if the Republicans control even one house of Congress, they can block the administration's initiatives – and the White House has not yet demonstrated any real tools to change the situation. Well, we can only hope that after the presidential election – if Biden wins – the Republicans will no longer have the desire to block the administration's foreign policy initiatives, and Trump's influence – if the former president loses the election – will not be so decisive. There is another important point: Putin will realize that he will not wait for the moment when the United States gets "tired" of supporting Ukraine, which could radically change the Russian president's political plans for the coming years.

It is equally difficult to answer the question of what will happen if Donald Trump wins the presidential election. The former president repeatedly criticized his successor's administration for its approach to the war in Ukraine and promised to reach an agreement with Vladimir Putin to end the war within 24 hours. However, Trump "forgot" that President Biden had spoken to Putin on numerous occasions before Putin's massive attack on Ukraine and convinced him not to attack. Both Biden and other Western leaders offered Russia negotiations on security issues, even after Russian leaders issued ultimatums to the United States and other NATO countries. So why does Donald Trump think he can offer Putin something that will satisfy the defiant Russian leader?

I don't have the answer to that question. But more importantly, Trump himself does not have an answer. And we do not know how the situation will develop if Trump and Putin do not agree – and they will not agree. And we don't know whether the United States will increase its aid to Ukraine in that case, or whether Trump will simply decide to "get out of the game" and "focus on America. We also do not know how the European Union will behave in such a situation.

By the way, the situation with European aid to Ukraine today looks more predictable than with US aid. As you know, at the last EU summit it was decided to start negotiations on the accession of Ukraine and Moldova to the EU. But at the same time, Hungar-

ian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who was expected to block the issue of starting these talks, blocked the issue of allocating aid to Ukraine. And then the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, decided to convene an extraordinary EU summit in early February so that EU leaders could reach an agreement on the allocation of this vital aid.

To be sure, the leaders of the European Union can reach an agreement without Orban. But the EU values the principle of consensus. And if it is possible to persuade the Hungarian prime minister, of course they will try. Moreover, a decision on the allocation of aid without consensus is a more complicated procedure that requires annual approval by the participants.

On the eve of the summit, however, there are increasing signs that Orban will compromise and refuse to block the aid. The Hungarian prime minister is convinced that his stubbornness and apparent flirtation with Russian President Vladimir Putin are increasingly irritating his colleagues. On the issue of aid to Ukraine, Orban is not even supported by his closest ally and EU neighbor, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who emphasized during talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Denys Shmyhal in Uzhhorod that Slovakia was leaning toward approving the aid program. So who can we count on?

In addition, Orban has clearly made a fool of himself in the situation of Sweden's admission to NATO. For many months, he and his closest associates have been emphasizing that Hungary will not be the last country to ratify the agreement on Sweden's accession to the alliance. In fact, the Turkish parliament has already voted in favor of this decision, but the Hungarian parliament has not yet! This is despite the fact that the Alliance needs Sweden's accession to NATO more than Sweden needs it. Because Sweden's integration creates unprecedented conditions for NATO in the Baltic Sea and strengthens the defense capabilities of the three Baltic states – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. And there is growing talk in the West that the Baltic states could become Putin's next "testing ground" – if not for a real war, then for a hybrid war with NATO. And every month that Sweden's

accession to NATO is delayed creates, so to speak, exclusive opportunities for Russia. Yes, it is Orban who creates such opportunities! That is why it is important for him to rehabilitate himself.

And in general, all these fears about the Baltic states show a new trend in the perception of reality, at least by European politicians and societies –

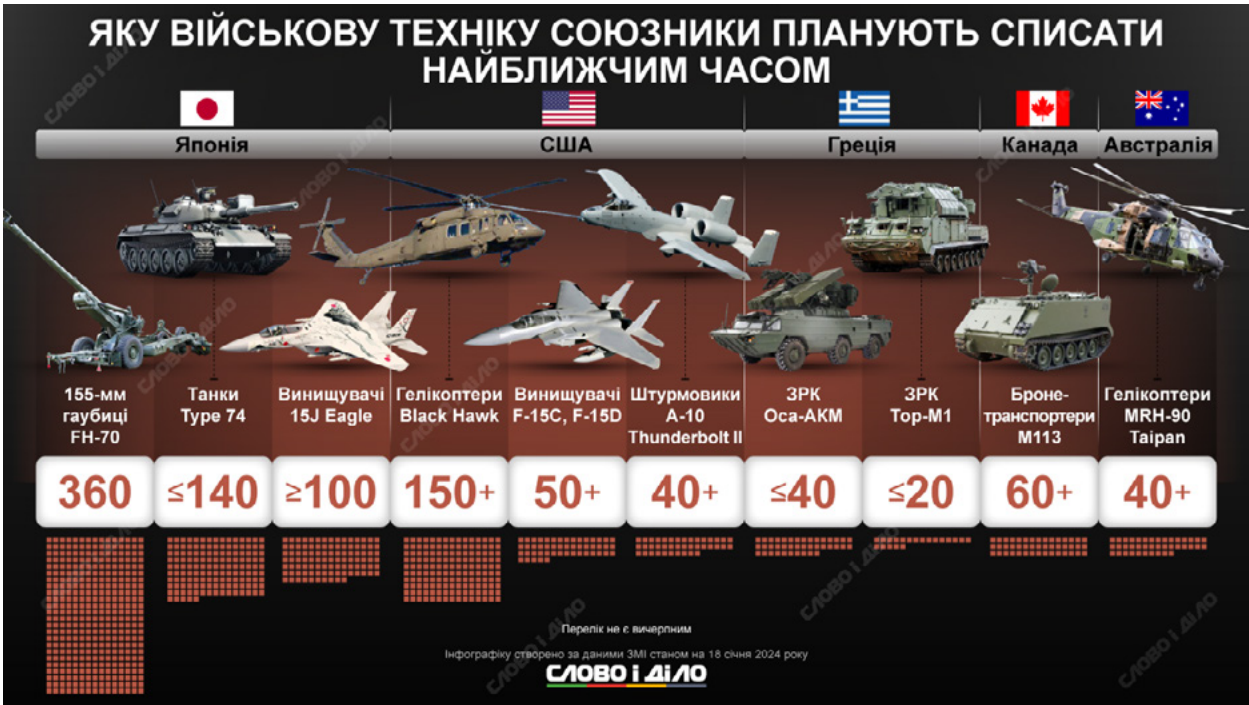
the fear of their own war with Putin's Russia. In January, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, and other prominent Western leaders spoke about the possibility of such a clash in the coming years.

And this is what we were talking about two years ago. If we do not stop Russia in its war with Ukraine, if we do

not prove that totalitarianism cannot impose its whims, the metastases of the Russian-Ukrainian war will be felt all over the world. And it is not only the Middle East, where U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken first spoke of these metastases during his visit to war-torn Israel.

It is also about Europe.

WHAT MILITARY EQUIPMENT DO THE ALLIES PLAN TO WRITE OFF IN THE NEAR FUTURE



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SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

Oles Doniy

WE MUST LOOK FOR THE POSITIVE



There is less than a month to go before the 2nd anniversary of full-scale Russian aggression. There is no end to the war in sight. If a year ago my warnings that the weighted average time frame of the war would last another 15 years (at least until Putin's death, which is the weighted average forecast of his bio-cycle) were met with complete misunderstanding, even aggression, today more and more analysts are realizing the realism of my analysis. Accordingly, we should learn to calculate our own resource base for the long term. Resources are weapons, finances, and people, or rather, people first and foremost. And when it comes to people, it is the motivation of these people. Ukraine showed the whole world a model of self-motivation when, after the start of full-scale fascist Russian aggression, tens of thousands of people voluntarily rushed to the military recruitment offices to sign up as volunteers, took up arms and fought back against the enemy.

Almost two years have passed since then. Many of those volunteers are no longer alive. The shelling of Ukrainian cities continues, and in January Kharkiv and Kyiv suffered another loss of life. These losses are irreparable, they run through the hearts of many Ukrainian families, and those hearts continue to bleed. Last summer in Kyiv, a blast wave from a Russian missile killed my mother-in-law, my wife's mother. She was thrown from the window against the wall, and it was a severe blow, she was gone in a week. There are more and more families with such losses.

How many Ukrainian families are losing the ability to experience positive emotions? No one can count, because the state still hides the number of dead Ukrainians. And the Kremlin has taken the direction of exhausting Ukraine

and Ukrainians. Russia is not launching a full-scale offensive, it continues to conduct narrow tactical military operations at the front (as in the Avdiivka region), continues to terrorize civilians with shelling, and expects the geopolitical situation to change and internal Ukrainian divisions to occur.

We must learn to remain positive even in the face of disappointing news. We should not bury our heads in the sand like an ostrich and pretend that everything is fine. No, we should try to analyze the growing problems objectively. And not from the position of a detached analyst, but by looking for ways to level out the problem areas. And always revive the positive. The positive is an internal resource. Discouragement is an anti-motivational blow, something that can undermine defenses from within.

What works for anti-motivation?

The geopolitical trends are changing significantly. The domestic agenda in the United States has blocked attention to Ukraine. We are falling into the trap of making the allocation of financial tranches and weapons dependent on migration issues between the US and Mexico.

In the situation of the pause taken by the United States in the Ukrainian issue, the shoulder of support of the European allies becomes more significant and decisive. In late January, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that the German state's support for Ukraine in 2024 would amount to more than 7 billion euros. Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Ivan Havryliuk, quoted French Armed Forces Minister Sebastian Lecorne as saying that France plans to produce 78 self-propelled 155 mm Caesar artillery systems for our country and is ready to supply 3,000 shells per month for them.

However, European political elites, like North American ones, depend on election cycles, so the current pro-Ukrainian leadership of EU countries will not last forever. Hungary, with its local leader Orban's "strange" flirtation with Putin in many ways, was joined by Slovakia after the formation of the new government. On January 9 this year, the official website of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry published a "Joint Statement on the Transfer of Ballistic Missiles between the DPRK

and Russia", expressing outrage at the transfer of ballistic missiles from the DPRK to fascist Russia and the use of these missiles against Ukraine on December 30, 2023 and January 2, 2024. The statement was signed by the foreign ministers of the European Union and Ukraine's non-EU allies, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Georgia, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Argentina, Japan, Israel, and others.

Russia is no longer satisfied with its own capabilities in the war with Ukraine, nor with the Iranian "Shahedin", and is looking for weapons all over the world. Western intelligence has documented the intensification of supplies between North Korea and fascist Russia, which in turn has caused justified indignation and a quick reaction from the political elites of the Western world – Ukraine's allies. However, this statement lacks the signatures of the foreign ministers of two EU countries, namely Hungary and Slovakia.

The statements of the representatives of the governments of these two "non-signatories" turned out to be written as if they had been copied. "But we are not going to do it just because someone comes to us and says that he thinks so but does not provide us with any evidence to back it up," said Slovak Foreign Minister Juraj Branár regarding the refusal to sign the statement condemning military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia. "Since we were not provided with any evidence, we could not verify the validity of the statements contained in the statement," and this is a similar explanation given by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Peter Sztaray. These "ignorant" foreign ministers of Hungary and Slovakia have created a hole in the common European ship in favor of fascist Russia, which with its aggression threatens not only Ukraine, but the entire European home and the world-view values on which this European home is built. However, Ukraine should be prepared for the fact that in the course of a long war (that's why I keep reminding you of the possible 15 years!) such violations may arise from other governments.

Therefore, first of all, Ukraine should



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create its own security system. This includes the restoration of the military-industrial complex, the system of manning the army, and the solution of economic problems, social problems, demographic problems, problems of internal unity, and so on.

There are also gaps in these issues. During the discussion "2024: Scenarios for the Country," the head of the ruling Servant of the People faction, David Arakhamia, said that 17 MPs had already submitted applications to resign their parliamentary powers, but the government decided not to let them go. The faction leader did not even seem to realize that he was

boasting about putting ordinary MPs in a slave-like state where they have no right to look for another job. The authorities have set a course of not holding elections for as long as possible (years? decades? no one can answer this question), and since there are only 401 MPs instead of the full 450, the reduction of the parliamentary corps is a danger to the "eternal power".

It is good that at least the authorities had the sense to defuse the public conflict between the supporters of the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which was spreading on soci-

al media.

Is it possible to look for the positive in this situation? It is possible and necessary. Ukrainian defenders are holding the front line, and this is our greatest success. Internal strength can be nourished even by rejoicing at the performances of Ukrainian tennis players at the Australian Open Grand Slam tennis tournament, or the Dovbyk-Tsygankov football duo at this year's incredible Girona in the Spanish championship. The Ukrainian nation continues to compete, the Ukrainian nation continues to fight, and this positive attitude will not and cannot be dented.

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SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

Katerina Manoff | Ukrainian Roots, American Branches

LET ME BE HONEST WITH YOU



"Hi, Katia, how are you?"

If you've been in the US for some time, you'll know the right answer to this question. Great! Good. Fine, thanks. Or, if you're having a particularly terrible day, It's okay.

Mastering American small talk is a rite of passage no less significant than applying for a green card or passing the driver's license test in English. Upon being greeted with the ubiquitous "How are you?", new arrivals might launch into detailed, sincere accounts of their week. But they soon learn that Americans don't talk like that. Here, the custom is to keep it light, positive, and brief.

Along with greetings, we learn the art of paying compliments about our new American acquaintances' homes, accessories, and hairstyles. It doesn't matter if the hairstyle makes her look like a frumpy poodle or the kitchen remodel is tacky or the bracelet gauche. Small talk is the glue that holds American relationships together, in business, in the neighborhood, and even in the family.

Not so for Ukrainians. Most of us pride ourselves on being honest. Straightforward. On always telling it like it is.

And, at first glance, honesty seems like a good quality. What could possibly be wrong with telling the truth?

To illustrate, let me take you back to my childhood. Raised by traditional Ukrainian parents (and grandparents), I grew up on a diet of well-intentioned criticism.

"You're too skinny – you need to eat more."

"Your skin has gotten terrible, just look at all those new pimples."

"Do you think any boy is going to want to marry you if you talk like that?"

"That shirt absolutely doesn't match your pants."

Even now, recalling these comments, I feel their sting. They came from love – always from love. To protect me from the judgment of others. To teach me how to do better. To ensure I was happy, healthy, and beautiful. But usually, they just made me feel like crap.

As an adult, the topics changed, but the tone did not.

"Why are you dragging your baby halfway across the world?"

"You want to buy that house? But it looks terrible!"

"Here's how you need to feed your husband so he doesn't leave you." (Side note: Turned out some boy did want to marry me after all).

For a while, I thought my family was just unusually critical. Maybe it was in our genes, or bad habits passed down from generation to generation. But when I began reconnecting with Ukrainian culture as an adult, I realized that this phenomenon stretched well beyond my mama and babusia.

When a professional photographer recently advertised her services in my Ukrainian moms' Facebook group, other women commented that her photos were outdated, tacky, and borderline embarrassing. Around Halloween, another member launched a tirade against those celebrating this "sinful holiday."

And it's not just online. Recently, I hosted a Ukrainian event at my home, and one person I'd literally just met immediately ordered me to put a towel down or I'd ruin my floors. I thanked her for the idea. "No, I mean NOW," she insisted. "Run and get that towel!" (I ran and got the towel. My American husband watched in silent shock.)

The thing about Ukrainian rudeness

is that we almost always have good intentions. But our directness often morphs into rudeness. What we fail to grasp is a concept that Americans call impact vs. intent – a concept you're familiar with if you've ever had your small child insist, "But I didn't mean to smash that glass vase! I was only trying to help!"

We're only trying to help, but we're too trigger-happy with our opinions. We smash our loved ones' and strangers' feelings like so many crystal vases. In our attempts to tell it like it is, we forget that there usually isn't one truth – just our truth, which may not overlap from another person's truth. That most choices have pros and cons, that it's okay to learn from our own mistakes. That our well-intentioned honesty may quickly become obnoxious.

In our Facebook group, during one of these flareups of rudeness, someone wrote,

"Do you know what problem Ukrainians all around the world suffer from?"

They love to bring their own charter to someone else's monastery."

Like so many Ukrainian sayings, this one hit the nail on the head.

I love that conversations with my Ukrainian friends can be deeper and more sincere. I love that they give me honest advice when I ask for it. I like that we, as a nation, are not fake and want to go beyond surface-level conversations.

But I wonder if we can keep this sincerity and depth without taking it too far and hurting each other? One day, perhaps, we'll visit each other's monasteries with honesty, openness, and respect.



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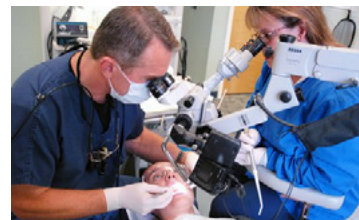
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ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ

Котик і півник

Жили собі котик і півник. Котик ходив у ліс по дрова, а півник їсти варив. Іде котик з дому та й наказує:

— Не відкривай, півнику, лисичці, бо вкраде тебе.

Пішов котик, а лисичка вже тут як тут.

**Півнику, півнику,
виглянь у віконечко,
Я тобі зерен принесла.**

Півник виглянув у віконечко, а лисичка його хап та й понесла.

Кричить півник:

**Несе мене лиска
По каміннім мості,
На золотім хвості.
Котику-братику,
Порятуй мене.**

Прибіг котик і вирятував півника з біди. На другий день йде з дому і знову просить півника, аби не відкривав нікому. Не послухав півник: тільки прийшла лисичка, відразу ж і відкрив віконце. Лисичка його вхопила і несе.

А півник кричить:
**Несе мене лиска
По каміннім мості,
На золотім хвості.
Котику-братику,
Порятуй мене.**

Почув котик і на цей раз, прибіг і визволив з біди. На третій день



збирається котик у ліс по дрова і каже:

— Півнику, сьогодні я піду дуже далеко. Що б не казала тобі лисичка — не відчиняй віконце, бо на цей раз, коли потрапиш у біду, я не почую.

Пішов котик. А лисичка вже тут як тут:

— Півнику, півнику, виглянь у віконечко.

— Ток, ток, не велів коток, — відмовляє півник.

— Ну як хочеш. Тільки знай: проїздили дорогою люди, везли зерно. Мішок розв'язався, і пшеничка посипалася на землю. Не хочеш вийти,

то когось іншого покличу.

Сказавши це, хитра лисичка насипала пшеничку на стежці, а сама заховалася. Через деякий час виглянув півник — і справді лежить зерно пшенички. Він, не довго думаючи, вийшов на вулицю і почав клювати зерно, зовсім забувши про обережність. Вибігла із схованки лисиця, вхопила півника та й понесла. А він кричить:

**Несе мене лиска
По каміннім мості,
На золотім хвості.
Котику-братику,
Порятуй мене.**

Кричав, сердешний, кричав, але котик не почув, бо був далеко.

Повернувся котик увечері додому і

дуже засмутився, що півника нема. Вирішив він йти визволяти товариша з біди. Взяв з собою писану торбу, дудку. Прийшов до лисиччиного будинку. А тут зібралась вся лисяча родина. Коли це чують:

**Ой у лиски, лиски,
новий двір,
Ще й чотири дочки на
підбір.**

**А п'ятий синок
Пилипок.**

**Вийди, лиско,
подивися,
Чи хороше граю.**

— Ой, мамо, піду я подивлюся, хто це так грає, — сказала старша дочка.

Тільки вона за поріг, а котик її цвп та в писану торбу. І знову грає. Так і виманив з хати котик

інших трьох сестер. А лисичка чекала-чекала, та й посилає сина:

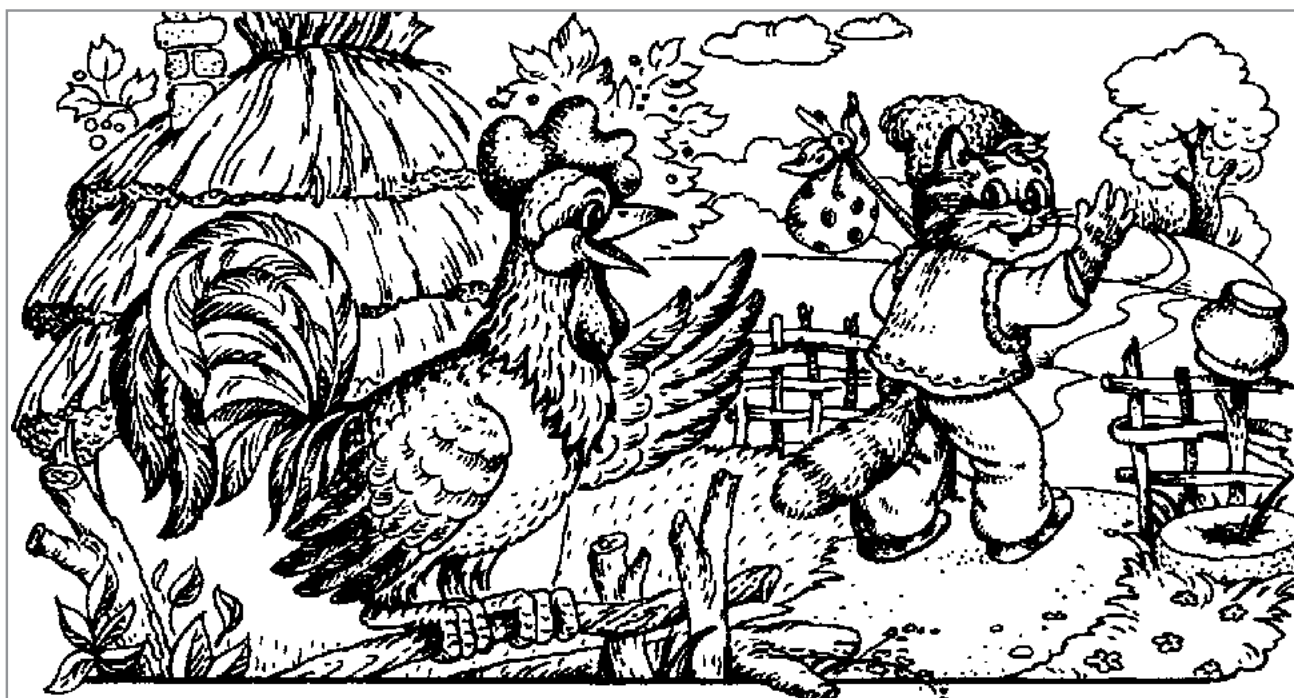
— Підди лиш подивися, що вони там роблять, та швиденько гони їх в хату.

Тільки той на поріг, а котик його цап та в писану торбу. Чекала лисичка дітей, та й каже:

— Піду я сама подивлюся, де вони там забарилися.

Не встигла вона ступити на поріг, як сама опинилася коло діток в торбі. А котик вбіг у хату, розв'язав півника. Як же зрадив бідолоха, обійняв котика, заплакав з радощів. Щасливі друзі пішли додому.

З тих пір півник завжди і в усьому слухався котика і ніколи більше не потрапляв у халепу.



LITUNY – A VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT OF UKRAINIANS IN CALIFORNIA IN 2 YEARS

"Lituny" is the name of a group of volunteers who have been helping to send humanitarian aid from San Francisco to Warsaw or Krakow, and from there to Ukraine, for 2 years of war with barbaric Russia. Today we are going to tell you more about this volunteer movement. The story of the origin of the movement began in the first days of the war in early March 2022.

The scale of the tragedy did not leave Ukrainians in California unaffected, and the growing needs of the armed forces and medical services forced us all to act, says Yarema Kuzyshyn, one of the first activists of the "Lituny" community. It took days and hours to deliver such essential items as body armor, protective gear, helmets, tourniquet, and tactical medicine. But none of the postal services could offer delivery within 2-3 days. For the first six months, we had to negotiate with the airlines to get a discount on baggage transport for each flight; some airlines gave us a partial discount, others 50%, and there were some that met us halfway and transported the cargo for free, which ultimately saved us thousands of dollars.

As in most cases, it all started with an announcement on our Facebook page with a question: Who is going to Poland in the near future? Luckily, the next day, a Ukrainian woman from Sacramento replied that she was flying to Krakow. Therefore, the first "Litun" with three suitcases containing 10 bulletproof vests for the defenders of Kyiv delivered such a valuable cargo in one day. It is worth noting that this valuable purchase was made by Natalia Anyon, who later financed tens of thousands of dollars of humanitarian aid, many thanks to her!

Later, the number of people who wanted to send humanitarian aid for their relatives, friends and acquaintances grew, and we all began to meet at the San Francisco airport and hand over suitcases to passengers who agreed to take these humanitarian goods to Europe. One of those initiative Ukrainians who took responsibility for receiving, accounting for, and organizing the shipments from San Francisco to Ukraine was Ivan Hyde. The first few months of shipments were so intense that we sometimes had to ship 2-3 times a week!

Gradually, the team of volunteers



who handled the shipments grew. Now there are more than 20 people involved in organizing this process. Each volunteer in the team is responsible for a part of the project.

Olga Nakhodkina, Zhenia Militeeva, and Volodymyr Prokurashko are responsible for packing, preparing documents, organizing the reception of the cargo on the other side of the ocean, and other organizational issues.

They systematize and prepare the cargo for shipment: Maksym Pavlishin and Oksana Stus.

Ruslan Kiyanchuk and Oleg Zenzin are responsible for coordination at the San Francisco airport.

The rest of our team is responsible for transporting cargo to the airport: Anna Demydenko, Dmytro Heichenko, Yarema Kuzyshyn, Maks Bregeda, Max Kuzmenko, Oleksandr Golovaty, Sergey Lobov, Sergii Gubenko, Andrii Gubenko, Vlad Karpinsky, Yulia Shafranova, Yuriy Sokolov.

And Ivan Haid coordinates the whole process.

Honor and gratitude to all those who buy and provide our defenders with the necessary equipment for the fight! All this helps to save the lives of thousands of Ukrainians.

Our movement would not have been possible without the help of our friends, volunteers from Rivne, namely Andrii Semenovych, Olha Stepanyuk and Victoria Shynkarenko from the NGO "Helping the Army in Rivne", who ensure the fast delivery of goods from Poland to Ukraine and their further distribution to the recipients.

For two years of activity, here are the numbers and volume of humanitarian aid sent: **1,500 suitcases** weighing about **35 tons** and **worth \$3.5 million** were delivered. Compensation from the airlines was returned in the amount of **\$500 thousand**.

This is the aid that Ukrainians in California have been delivering during the nearly two years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The items were needed immediately to save lives. Ukrainians in California have been sending aid regularly since 2014, but the large-scale invasion has reinvigorated the community to increase aid.

Finally, a huge thank you to the wings on which most of this humanitarian aid was transported, the US airline **United Airlines!** They provided their services free of charge in the most difficult time for us Ukrainians! Thank you, United Airlines! Dear friends, this is an iron argument that we should always use the services of United Air-



lines and be grateful for their help!

The war continues, do not reduce the amount of aid and donations, only in unity we are strong!

Together to victory!

Glory to Ukraine!
Glory to the heroes!

WATCH THE MOVIE

"20 DAYS IN MARIUPOL"



Myroslav Hrehk

This documentary was created by Ukrainian war correspondent and writer, videographer Mstislav Chernov, who worked for the Associated Press, about the bombing of Mariupol at the beginning of the war in February-March 2022. The film was made in cooperation with AR and Frontline and was released in 2023. It premiered on January 21, 2023 at the Sundance Film Festival, the largest independent film festival in the United States, where it was selected for the Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary and won the Audience Award. The film was nominated for an Oscar from Ukraine in the category of Best International Feature Film.

The film shows the bombing of residential areas of the city by racists at the beginning of the invasion, mass deaths and injuries of civilians, crimes of the occupiers, the work of Ukrainian doctors, and the consequences of the bombing of Maternity Hospital #3. In particular, for the first time shown by AR, the materials were regularly sent to the editorial office from the only place in Mariupol where there was still an online connection – under the stairs near a destroyed grocery store.

In this way, they managed to transmit 10% of the footage. The rest, 30 hours of Mstislav Chernov's video, was taken by the AR team from Mariupol through the humanitarian corridor on March 15. They were the last journalists in the city at the time. The film based on Mstislav Chernov's footage was made by the team of Frontline, the longest-running documentary program in the history of the United States, broadcast on PBS.

Almost a year later, on January 11, 2024, 20 Days in Mariupol was screened in San Rafael, California, at the Rafael Film Center, a theater that specializes in screening festival films and high-profile events around the world.

As a viewer, I would like to say that the film is very difficult to watch: To see the aftermath of the bombing, the movement of racist tanks through the city, their shooting at houses, at the hospital, the agony of the wounded, their desperation and pain, their running from place to place, hiding under the walls, blood and tears, horror in the eyes of adults and children, dead bodies on the asphalt, a hospital overcrowded with wounded, the work of doctors, nurses, ambulances, human suffering. Most memorable was an el-

derly father crying over his 16-year-old son on a gurney covered with a bloody sheet, who could not be saved, and wailing, "Son – what happened? Why? The sobs of a young family who had just lost their little daughter; a bloody, wounded pregnant woman who was taken from a destroyed maternity hospital to a hospital and finally died, and her fetus with her. And there are many such scenes...

At the end of the film, the presenter, a cinema employee (unfortunately, I did not write down her name) and Mstislav Chernov spoke to the audience in the form of an interview:

Host (hereinafter referred to as H.): We have just seen an amazing movie and its creator Mstislav Chernov is here to talk about it. Let's thank him for the movie and listen to him.



Mstislav Chernov (hereafter M.): Thank you for gathering here and inviting me. It is important for me, because I will hear your opinion, your questions, and I will try to answer them. I would like to tell you what I felt at the time when I was in the middle of this tragedy, because the shooting was mostly during the day, and we were a target for the occupiers, constantly under bombardment. Although they do not stop now. Yesterday my hometown

was bombed again and many civilians were wounded. Many towns have suffered from Russian bombs: Volnovakha, Vuhledar, Bakhmut, Maryinka, Avdiivka. I was doing my job to show the horrors of war in places like Afghanistan, Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Gaza. But when I saw it in Mariupol – this land, this city – I wanted to do something to change it, to make sure that people remember what happened and that it stays in people's minds. I do not look at our history through newspapers or magazines, which do not show everything that happened, but only a part of it. That's why we started to collect more information about what happened in Mariupol to make a film and show the truth to the people, to give them the truth.

H.: Could you tell us more about the bombing? Because the more the story develops, the more people want to understand what happened, so they need to see this movie.

M.: It was very difficult to show people what happened in Mariupol, and we searched for a long time for a way to do it. We found a lot of survivors and they began to tell us what happened, what happened to them, what they felt, what they saw. But we did not use all the interviews because many stories were lost. But that time and the people who were there and what they actually experienced, all that remains in the memory.

Seeing that I was a journalist, people asked me if our country even existed, what was happening in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv, because they thought that since Mariupol and the whole country were defeated, they did not know what was happening to the country. Later, when we had Internet connection, we received hundreds of messages from people looking for their relatives and asking about them. Many of the people who asked were not from Mariupol and they went there because they had relatives there and it was difficult for them to find them, they did not know where they were, in which shelter or bomb shelter. Then we started getting responses from some people – I saw them, contacted their families, and people thanked us for finding the people they were looking for. It was also very important to me. People told me that I had to be in Mariupol and tell the world what was really happening. Yes, I had to be there to convey people's feelings and experiences, so that later there would be no fakes, so that no one would think that there was nothing so terrible. The names of the people that we interviewed and talked to and that I

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talk about in the movie are real names. Then I came across the news, where Russians were showing and talking about Mariupol, but it was their vision – the vision of the occupiers who occupied the city and filmed their version of Mariupol, where they interpreted Russian soldiers as heroes. They destroyed Mariupol, but they said that they were liberating it, that they were looking for Nazis and killing them. If you are in Russia and you want to find the truth and you listen to this information, it will not be true. I was scared when I saw all the things they were saying. They had a big budget and great opportunities, and this was their attempt to falsify reality. If we hadn't made our movie, Russia could have shown the world completely different fakes and said that their movies are true.

H.: Could you tell us more about the filmmaking process, about the shooting process itself?

M.: I started filming at the beginning

of the war, when Crimea was occupied. Almost every shot I took was right after something happened. I started talking about the bombing of our territories in 2014. The Russians started to make their news the opposite of the real news. Both in Europe and in the United States they spoke differently, everyone had their own opinion. Then I realized how confusing everything was, I had my own vision of what I would do next. It was difficult to fight for the truth. The Russians had great opportunities to do that, a big budget to give their vision. But what they found, what they filmed and what they told people was all fake, all Russian propaganda.

H.: Can we talk about the people who are in the movie? How did they and you get through the checkpoints?

M.: When we approached each of the checkpoints, we thought whether we would live or not, that we would be searched, and we had to hide a lot of our files and materials. We buried them in the ground, and unfortunately now

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we don't even know where they are or how to find them. We were very afraid that if they found the flash drives and the documents, they could film us and make us say that it was all fake, that it was all not true. We took some small flash drives and the most important footage to the checkpoints and hid everything we could wherever we could. One of our women even hid it in a tampon. That's when I realized how hard it is to be a journalist (laughter in the audience). Our information has become very important for the whole world, because we are all fighting for the truth, and journalists have become a target for the occupiers. When we passed through all the checkpoints and came to our territory, we were met by Ukrainians who asked us to show our documents. We all burst into tears because we heard the Ukrainian language.

H.: In the film you showed a certain Volodymyr. Who was he?

M.: Volodymyr was a rescuer, then he was injured, taken to the hospital, and after he recovered he went to fight in Donbass. When he came to us, the Russians shelled the hospital and there were many dead and wounded. They fired from a tank with a direct aim at the hospital. Later we found out the names of the shooters who committed these crimes. We also found many of our survivors in the hospital and those who provided medical care, but unfortunately many people died and we can't bring them back.

H.: Tell us about the reactions of people who have seen your movie.

M.: When I showed the film to people from Mariupol, I thought it would traumatize them. But they reacted differently – they said that it was very good that we showed this movie, that it gives a reason to unite people, to unite them to overcome difficulties and misfortunes, to help them to survive and to win.

H.: Thank you for this interesting information and open conversation. And now let's turn to our viewers, maybe they have questions.

Natalia Anon: You went through hell, what were the most difficult moments for you? Do you still have any hope?

M.: Don't make me go through it again, everything there was difficult. I was there when the theater in Mariupol was bombed. As a result of this bombing 500 people died. My friend from Kyiv was also killed, he was found shot in the head in the forest. Then I was invited to Rome to give a lecture. I traveled first through Poland



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and then to Rome. I traveled by car, I liked the city, but I was angry.

I talked to an Italian, I said it's so nice here, I see a beautiful city, but I can't enjoy it, I remember Mariupol, and it's hard for me to find hope and to think that everything will be all right. And he told me, this Italian, that Rome was burned down more than 5 times, but it was rebuilt and looks beautiful now, and Ukrainian Mariupol will be reborn in the same way. That's the kind of hope we have.

Oleh Zenzin: Have you seen the movie Napoleon? Because my wife, my son, who is 16 years old, and I watched it, and afterwards, when we went home and discussed this movie, my son said the following sentence: "Don't mess with Russia", which can be translated as "Don't tease Russia" in his understanding, this is the feeling he had after the movie. And I had the same feeling when I saw the footage from your movie, when you showed



the already captured Mariupol and the Russian flag was placed against the ruins. I mean, it seems like you're also saying – don't make fun of the Russians, about the impossibility of fighting them, the impossibility of overcoming the evil power. Could you show in your next movie that it is possible and necessary to fight Russia, that Ukraine has been repelling this invasion for years, despite the lack of weapons and insufficient help from partners, so that after the movie people cannot have the thought "Don't mess with Russia"?

M.: I agree with you, I thought about it, I really wanted to say and tell a lot of things in the movie, but when you make a movie you have to choose the things you want to convey the most. For me, it was important to show the insensibility of war, its destructive power, and to show it to the whole world. With that, I thank you all for coming, for your attention to my movie, and I'll see you soon!




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UKRAINIAN NEWS

Total enemy combat losses



According to the General Staff, the total combat losses of the enemy from February 24, 2022 to January 31, 2024 are approximately as follows:

Personnel – about 385,230 were eliminated,
Tanks – 6,310 units,
Armored personnel carriers – 11,757 units,
Artillery systems – 9,195 units,
MLRS – 974 units,
Air defense systems – 663 units,
Aircrafts – 332 units,
Helicopters – 324 units,
Operational and tactical level UAVs – 7,100 units,
Cruise missiles – 1,846 units,
Ships and boats – 23 units,
Submarines – 1 unit,
Vehicles and tankers – 12,231 units,
Special equipment – 1,452 units.

Military aid for Ukraine



The United States is providing Ukraine with GLSDB jet cruise bombs that can fly about 150 kilometers. The number of units is not specified. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland officially confirmed that the GLSDB bombs have been delivered

to Ukraine and are on their way to the front.

Leopard 2A4 tanks from the Netherlands and Denmark:

The first two of the 14 Leopard 2A4 tanks delivered by the Netherlands and Denmark to the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been overhauled at Rheinmetall. They are ready to be shipped to Poland for training of Ukrainian troops, and 12 more tanks are expected to arrive in Ukraine this summer.

Lithuania has shown its support:

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda announced a long-term aid package to Ukraine worth 200 million euros and new deliveries of military equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces. Recognizing the Kremlin regime as "bloodthirsty and ruthless," Lithuania will continue to provide assistance for two years, including supplies of ammunition, M577 armored personnel carriers, and training for the Ukrainian military.

Germany is building up its defense capabilities:

Germany has donated equipment and weapons, including Leopard 1 tank shells, RQ-35 Heidrun reconnaissance drones, air defense systems, armored vehicles, TRML-4D radar systems, and more. The new military assistance package includes the Skynex drone destruction system and a variety of weapons and will help strengthen Ukraine's defense and security.

In addition, Ukraine received:

- 10 Marder armored personnel carriers;
- 9080 rounds of 155mm ammunition;
- 2 WISSENT mine-resistant tanks;
- 1 bridge-building tank;
- 30 drone detection systems;
- 10 GO12 counter battery radars;
- 10 Zetros trucks;
- 3 8x8 HX81 tractors and a semi-trailer;
- 750 thousand rounds of ammunition.

Also, a new batch of military aid. It includes more than two dozen armored personnel carriers and ammunition.

- 24 armored personnel carriers;
- 4 Bandvagn 206 all-terrain tracked vehicles;
- Shells for IRIS-T air defense systems;
- 1,040 rounds of 155 mm caliber ammunition;
- 3 WISSENT 1 demining tanks;
- 1 BIBER bridge paver with spare parts;
- 14 special equipment for demining tanks;

- 1 naval demining system;
- 1 Satcom video surveillance system;
- 194,000 individual food rations.

Britain increases its support:

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announces a 2.5 billion pound (about \$3.2 billion) military aid package for Ukraine. The package includes long-range missiles, air defense equipment, artillery ammunition, and maritime security equipment to be delivered in 2024-2025.

Latvia stands ready to provide new assistance:

Latvia has announced a new package of military assistance to Ukraine's armed forces, including howitzers, helicopters, and other weapons. Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs stressed his country's readiness to provide a wide range of weapons and equipment.

France is stepping up its support:

French Defense Minister Sébastien Le Corionne announced his readiness to supply Ukraine with up to 50 A2SM bombs per month until the end of 2024, as well as to increase the supply of artillery shells to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

It was also announced that Ukraine will receive the first additional Caesar air defense systems from France.

Slovakia brings humanitarian aid:

Slovakia will provide Ukraine with humanitarian aid for the winter period, including power generators, heaters, and more.

Financial assistance from Japan:

Japan provides \$37 million to purchase drone detection systems and technical assistance, including gas turbine generators and transformers.

Sweden expands ammunition production:

Sweden has signed an agreement with Nammo to expand the production of artillery shells on its territory for further delivery to Ukraine. The agreement is aimed at increasing the supply of 155 mm artillery ammunition and improving the reliability of supply.

Switzerland will provide financial assistance to Ukraine:

The Swiss government is preparing a 1.5 billion Swiss franc (about \$1.75 billion) financial assistance program for Ukraine. The money will be disbursed over three years, from 2025 to 2027. The money will be used for Ukraine's reconstruction programs.

Azerbaijan donated a demining machine.

Financial aid for Ukraine



The President's Office has published the full text of the Agreement on Security Cooperation between Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The document consists of 9 parts. The full text of the agreement is available on the website of the Presidential Administration.

The Agreement between Ukraine and the United Kingdom is aimed at deepening cooperation and partnership in the areas of international law enforcement and fundamental human rights. Joint efforts include coordination to support Ukraine's accession to NATO and to provide full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. It also provides support for the development of defense and security capabilities, financial assistance, humanitarian assistance, and reform assistance.

The agreement will last for 10 years.

As a reminder, the United Kingdom was the first country to sign a security agreement with Ukraine as part of the agreements reached at the NATO Summit in Vilnius.

Rammstein-18 meeting: Austin urges allies to provide more air defense systems to Ukraine



During the recent Ramstein meeting, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin called on Western allies to step up the provision of additional ground-based air defense systems to Ukraine.

Austin stressed the need to counter

the threats posed by Putin's missiles and drones, which could demoralize the Ukrainian people. He called on allies to deepen their support by providing Ukraine with the systems it needs for the winter and beyond.

At the same time, Austin emphasized the importance of the support that countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have provided to the Ukrainian armed forces by committing billions of dollars in assistance to Ukraine.

Ukraine returns more than 437 servicemen and civilians from captivity



On January 3, Ukraine managed to free 230 people from Russian captivity, including 130 servicemen of the Armed Forces and representatives of other military services.

The exchange was the 49th since the beginning of the war and included 6 civilians.

The total number of returned citizens is 2,828.

It was clarified that the released persons include representatives of various military units and civilians, including those who were illegally detained. The Russian side has frozen the exchange process since August 2023, but exchanges are taking place, including non-public and field exchanges, according to President Zelenskyy.

On January 31, another prisoner exchange with Russia took place. 207 people were returned to Ukraine.

This was the 50th exchange of prisoners.

Three NATO nations sign agreement to clear the Black Sea of mines



Representatives of Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania signed an agreement in Istanbul on Thursday, January 11, to jointly combat naval mines in the Black Sea.

The initiative is aimed at improving the safety of navigation, especially for ships transporting grain from Ukraine.

It is noted that the countries intend to create a special task force to deal with mine clearance issues, including protection against drifting mines.

The countries also plan to create a task force for mine clearance and mine protection. The actions are aimed at the territorial waters and economic zones of the participating countries.

Ukrainian Armed Forces Told How Many Chemical Attacks Russia Has Carried Out Since the Beginning of the Invasion



The aggressor country Russia has carried out 626 chemical attacks in Ukraine since the beginning of the large-scale war. Up to 10 cases of chemical use are recorded daily.

The dynamics of the use is growing, the most common are shells such as K-51 and RGR dropped from UAVs, improvised explosive devices and artillery shelling with shells containing chemically hazardous substances. On December 14, 2023, the use of a new type of gas grenade RG-VO with the chemical agent CS was detected. 36

cases of the use of dangerous chemicals were documented by the Radiological, Chemical and Biological Intelligence Groups together with the Security Service of Ukraine and sent for criminal investigation.

Training Ukrainian Armed Forces Pilots on the F-16



Ukrainian pilots and maintenance specialists have been divided into three groups as part of the F-16 training program. The training will take place in five Western countries.

First Deputy Defense Minister of Ukraine Oleksandr Pavliuk said on Telegram.

"Each country is making its own contribution. These are not only guarantees of aircraft, but also assistance with ammunition and everything necessary for the effective defense of Ukrainian skies with F-16s" Pavliuk emphasized.

He noted that Ukrainians are currently undergoing training in several programs:

- Young pilots are conducting training flights under international programs in the United Kingdom in order to be able to retrain on F-16 aircraft;
- Experienced pilots and ground personnel are being retrained for F-16s in Denmark and the United States;
- A third group of Ukrainian pilots and aviation personnel are improving their level of specialized aviation English in the UK, Canada, Poland and the US.

The ministry also noted that as of early January, in addition to the United States, Poland, Canada, the United Kingdom and Denmark, the aviation coalition includes nine other countries.

We recently wrote that the first group of Ukrainian pilots completed basic training on F-16s in the UK.

More than 40 foreign parts found

in Russian X-59 missiles



The National Anti-Corruption Agency has updated its database with data on more than 40 foreign parts found in Russian X-59 missiles. This was reported by the press service of the agency.

"It is these missiles in combination with "Shaheds", whose foreign parts can be found in our database, which Russia has recently begun to use regularly" the statement said.

Zaluzhny confirms destruction of Russian A-50 and Il-22 aircraft



Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Valeriy Zaluzhnyi confirmed the destruction of a Russian A-50 radar aircraft and an IL-22 air control center.

He wrote about it in a Telegram.

"The Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine destroyed an enemy A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and an enemy IL-22 air control center. I am grateful to the Air Force for the perfectly planned and executed operation in the Azov Sea region" he wrote.

The Ukrainian Air Force also confirmed the information: "Minus one enemy A-50 long-range radar detection aircraft and one enemy IL-22 air control center! The special operation in the Azov region was successful. To be continued..."

It will serve as evidence of the crimes of the enemy: MFA on the passportization of Ukrainian children in Russia



Putin's decree on granting Ukrainian children Russian citizenship is a violation of international law and is another proof of the enemy's crimes.

This was reported by the press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

It is known that on January 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree "On the definition of certain categories of foreign citizens and stateless persons who have the right to apply for citizenship of the Russian Federation". According to the document, orphans and children left without parental care who are citizens of Ukraine can receive Russian citizenship by personal decision of the dictator.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry stressed that this decision is aimed at meeting the demographic needs of the terrorist country to continue the war against Ukraine. In addition, Russia's actions violate international humanitarian law.

"The real value of this decree is that it will serve as further evidence of Russia's crimes against Ukraine, forced assimilation of Ukrainian children and attempts to deprive them of their own homeland" the ministry added.

The ministry calls on the International Criminal Court to take into account the dictator's actions to transfer children from one national group to another, including by forcibly granting them citizenship, which is a sign of genocide.

As reported, as of December 25, Russia is holding about four thousand Ukrainian foster children on its territory and under occupation.

Number of Russian

torture chambers in the de-occupied part of the Kharkiv region



Nearly 30 torture chambers of the Russian army have been discovered in the de-occupied part of the Kharkiv region, three of which remain undocumented due to intense shelling.

In total, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the investigators of the National Police have discovered 88 places of detention and torture in the de-occupied territories, where the Russians illegally detained and tortured people.

EU to help Romania develop ports for export of goods from Ukraine



The European Commission will provide Romania with more than 120 million euros for the development of seaports involved in the export of agricultural products from Ukraine.

This is stated in a statement by the European Commission.

The funds in the amount of 126 million euros will be allocated during 2024 and distributed among companies operating in Romanian ports and exporting Ukrainian goods.

The money will be used to build additional loading and storage facilities and equipment that will increase

the capacity for handling and storing Ukrainian products.

"This measure will be partially financed by the EU Solidarity Fund and will contribute to the functioning of the Solidarity Roads between Ukraine and the EU" the statement said.

Universal Combat Robot Developed in Ukraine



Ukrainian developers have created a universal robot that can conduct reconnaissance, attack or defend positions. It is currently being tested.

Deputy Prime Minister for Innovation, Education, Science and Technology Development and Minister of Digital Transformation Mykhailo Fedorov said this on Telegram.

"D-21-11 is a universal Ukrainian robot created by members of the Brave1 defense cluster. The machine is equipped with an automatic turret and can perform combat missions. For example, it can conduct reconnaissance, attack or defend positions" the head of the Ministry of Digital Transformation said.

The developers plan to integrate NATO weapons into the robot and increase its resistance to enemy electronic warfare. The team is currently working to scale up production.

Russians exported 4.8 million tons of grain from Ukraine last year

In the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, there is a system whereby all farmers must sell grain to the occupiers at a fixed price several times lower than the market price, and then the occupiers resell the grain and take the difference.

"This difference is the Kremlin's payment for 'loyalty'!" the National Resistance Center said in a statement.

Listen and do not pity. About the rehabilitation of amputees

Snezhana Gusarevych

Ukrainians are learning to live in a new reality. There are more and more people on the streets with prostheses or visible injuries sustained as a result of Russian aggression. But how many people in Ukrainian society are ready to see and interact with people with injuries? I thought I was morally prepared to record the conversation in Neznamni. In my mind, this recording should take place in a quiet place without witnesses, followed by observation of the training process. At the beginning of our conversation with the physiotherapist of Neznamni, the training room was filled with patients. Every time the automatic door opened and a man without a leg entered, I was at a loss for words. And this confusion was not because of their injuries, but because of my own lack of understanding of the reality in which I found myself. Thirteen smiling men are lying on couches on the floor, having a lively discussion before the class begins. Some of them already have prosthetics, others are just learning and preparing to live with them. During the class, I stood in the corner of the room, clutching my jacket, and thought: "Who exactly needs to be integrated into this new reality? People with war injuries, or everyone else who was not injured?"

Roksoliana Shmilo, a physiotherapist, has been working at the National Rehabilitation Center Neznamni since the very beginning of the project. Roksoliana works with civilians and military amputees. In the fall of 2023, the physiotherapist began to actively manage social networks TikTok, YouTube and Telegram, where she talks about the rehabilitation process of people who lost their limbs as a result of the war. During group lessons, she conducts live broadcasts on TikTok. She shoots short videos with them, including individual and group training, stump care, prosthetics, and the achievements of her patients, who take their first steps on prosthetics or clasp their hands thanks to the new bionic hand. The community spoke with the girl during a group session with military personnel undergoing rehabilitation at the center. Her direct speech is below.



The uniqueness of the rehabilitation process

The Neznamni National Rehabilitation Center in Lviv is the first and currently the only center in Ukraine that provides comprehensive rehabilitation for people who have been severely injured in the war. We differ from Superhumans (a center for prosthetics, reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation) in that Neznamni provides inpatient treatment. Our center focuses not only on amputations, but also on reconstructive surgery, burns, orthopedics, psychological and physical rehabilitation with our own prosthetics workshop. Neznamni was one of the first companies in Ukraine to start production and implementation of rehabilitation for visually impaired people. According to state standards, the rehabilitation process lasts either 14 or 21 days. At Neznamni, patients stay for at least 40 days. During this time the stump is prepared for the prosthesis. During individual lessons we work with the stump. We teach how to apply a bandage correctly. It is also important to strengthen the healthy limb for further use of the prosthesis. Then comes the prosthetic phase. We teach patients how to use the prosthesis properly, make corrections, and send them on vacation for two months. After that, they return to us to have their residual limbs replaced, with the possibility of installing an active foot and an electronic knee. And this is again a process of learning new skills. Our center installs primary

prostheses that perform daily functions. After a year, patients can have special prostheses fitted for running, swimming, etc. So far we have made and fitted over a hundred prostheses.

During my studies at the Lviv State University of Physical Culture and various courses, all textbooks and teachers insisted that physical therapy can only be individualized. This is not always the case. During my two years of work in Neznamni and observing the men, I realized that when they have a certain level of competition, they do their best in class. I suggested to the management that we try to organize group classes. After the first sessions we realized that there was a positive dynamic, an improvement in the psycho-emotional state. Group classes are a unique feature of our rehabilitation. The boys get to know each other and support each other. In addition to the idea of creating group classes, we have started recreational activities with the boys outside the center: trips to billiards, fishing, archery, and various master classes. This allows them to realize that they can achieve something, that life goes on. Normally, military hospitals have a strict regime and patients are not allowed to leave the premises. They used to be in wards of four people, so when we started to go to larger hospitals, we had to change that.

Listen and do not pity

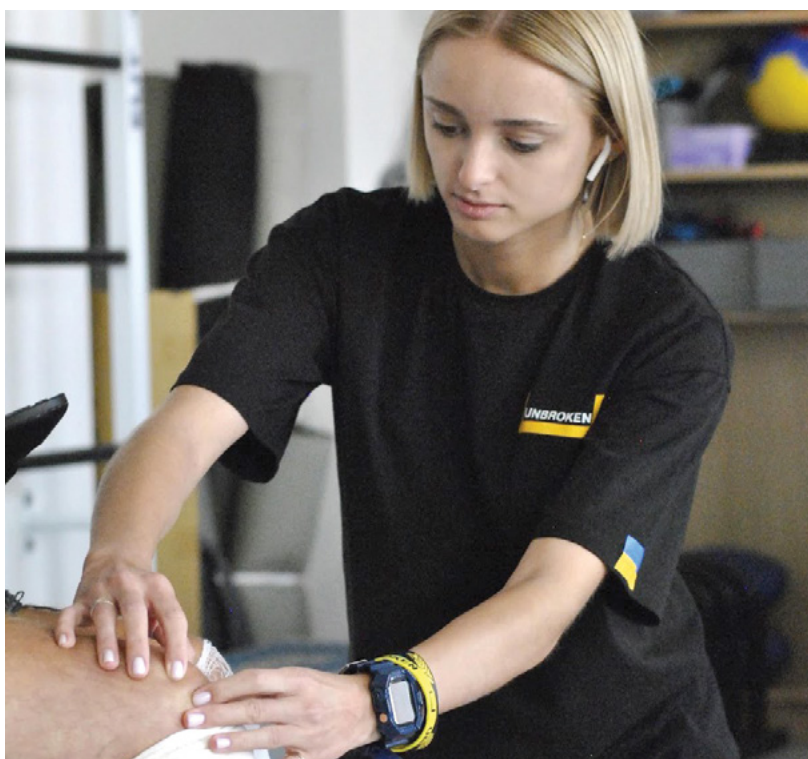
I don't treat people with lost limbs as people with disabilities. I never feel

sorry for them. They deal with it like any other person. Missing a limb is not a punishment. And it is not something extraordinary. It is not a disease. The men always share their stories, especially when I ask where they had their last surgery. Many of them have Go-Pro videos. So they show the video of the whole route: from being wounded, to first aid, to being evacuated from the battlefield. They always share. Of course, during treatment and rehabilitation, they have different stages of recovery and decline. But we go through these stages together. The main thing is to be able to support and communicate. Everything can be overcome and survived.

I think society needs to understand our new reality. It is necessary to spread the topic of rehabilitation in the media, to communicate it in every possible way. In fact, there are people who do not understand how to treat amputees. So I decided to spread information about rehabilitation in my social networks. I try to run a YouTube channel and a Telegram channel, but I get the most feedback and words of gratitude for my training videos on TikTok. Recently, I have been doing live broadcasts at group classes. A lot of people respond, comment and leave words of gratitude for the guys, which I read out to them right away. The most important thing is that family and close friends watch the broadcasts and call the guys after class to praise them. This gives them wings and inspires them even more. Sometimes people offer to help, like bringing candy. Last week, a woman on the live stream wrote that she lived nearby and wanted to bring some homemade cheesecake. The men in Nezlamni come from different regions of Ukraine, so when this woman brought 2 kg of cheesecake, it was the first time many of them had tasted this Lviv dessert.

The boys are actively involved in making the videos, which motivates them to develop their social networks and talk about their experiences. This is also an aspect that I decided to try, and it went in a very positive direction.

I do this to explain to people that there is no need to feel sorry for them. It's really hard when people don't hear you. I have seen people come up to the men on the street and give them money. They say, "I don't need it, I have everything, you're hurting me," but the person still says, "Take it, you lost your leg, your arm. You don't have to do that. People have to listen to each other. They have to learn to treat wounded soldiers not



with pity, but with respect.

Life with a prosthesis is possible
While the interview with Roksoliana was being recorded, a short video of two people with prostheses dancing a waltz was being shot in the training room.

It was the dream of civilian Viktoriia and veteran Simba (call sign): to make a video of them dancing a slow dance. Simba had waited a long time for his prosthetics. And now their dream has finally come true. Simba is a military man who lost his legs and is now continuing his rehabilitation. Vika was rehabilitated with us 1.5 years ago. She is a civilian. She lost her leg in an accident in Lviv. I work mostly with the military, but there are also civilians.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) who lost their limbs in rocket attacks and other terrorist actions of the Russian Federation. ***While the path of a military man after rehabilitation is more clear, the situation with IDPs is complicated. In most cases, when they are injured, they also lose their homes. They have nowhere to return to. It is a whole new life from scratch. That's why we try to support each other.*** Victoria lives in Lviv. After receiving treatment and prosthetics, she decided to work for Unbreakable as a social worker. Vika uses her own example to show amputees that life goes on with a prosthesis. And every day there are more opportunities.

SONGS FOR UKRAINE

How 130 Ukrainian singers spread the love of Ukrainian songs in London

Inna Mikhno

In 2022, in the midst of the horrific war in Ukraine, the UK launched the Songs for Ukraine project in response to Russia's invasion. 130 Ukrainians joined forces with artists from the Royal Opera House to form a unified choir for creative cultural exchange and support of the Ukrainian community. Throughout the partnership, Ukrainians and Britons explored Ukraine's rich historical heritage of traditional folk and Ukrainian choral music. The choir's repertoire includes music from the 1,000-year-old Ukrainian Christmas tradition. Most importantly, the arts have helped not only to introduce Ukraine to the world, to engage those who care about helping Ukrainians affected by the aftermath of war, but also to receive spiritual healing through music.

Royal tutelage

For many Ukrainians who have become refugees because of the war, the United Kingdom has become a second home. The government has launched a large-scale aid program for Ukraine, and as part of the program to help Ukrainians, ordinary Britons continue to welcome our people into their homes and provide them with temporary shelter.

Olga Dudnik, from Kyiv, has been living with her boyfriend for almost two years now. She is a member of the Songs for Ukraine choir (Royal Opera House Chorus Director William Spaulding, Chorus Director Bohdan Danny Parashchak, Learning and Participation Senior Manager Tom Floyd), co-organizer of the Christmas Ukrainian Carols concert, and a volunteer who shared the story of this large-scale project with Hromada.

According to Olha, the level of support for Ukrainians at the state level is incredible. This includes financial support for families with children and free education. It is therefore very logical that the Royal Opera House has taken on the implementation of a musical project aimed at helping the Ukrainian community, temporarily displaced persons, to move away from their experiences during the war and feel at home in the UK.

"The Royal Family supports this initiative and Ukraine in general. In fact,



the Royal Opera House took a break from their work when the full-scale invasion began to think about how they could help Ukraine directly through classical music. Their response was immediate. As you know, the Opera is planning a program in 5 years. And then, in September 2022, they announced a call for applications for the Song for Ukraine project, and in January we started weekly rehearsals," the choir member said.

The Learning & Participation Department at the Royal Opera House, which is directly involved in the Songs for Ukraine project, aimed to recruit 50 Ukrainian singers to join the 50 members of the choir. But many more responded... In the end, the project created a creative space for 130 Ukrainians.

United by song

In the process, the idea of the project evolved into a larger therapeutic and cultural diplomatic project. It also became a research project as Ukrainians explored and introduced Ukrainian culture to the British and the world.

Olha explains: "The project became art therapy for all of us. 130 Ukrainians found a place of recreation and emotional support for their souls. After all, most Ukrainians were like trees that had been uprooted from their homes and transplanted: everyone had experienced stress and a break with their families. My first degree is in music, as a pianist, and my second is in psychology. And sound affects the psycholog-

ical state, it is a deep therapy with music. Most of the displaced Ukrainians are women, so our female voices were amplified by men from the Royal Opera House. And in our first rehearsal together, they showed incredible empathy and care. We were very impressed by how sincere and expressive they were in trying to perform our songs in Ukrainian. Many of them help Ukraine with money, some of them host Ukrainians. Our leader, Gillian, is an amazing person. She always comes up to everyone and asks how they are, how their family is, how their husband is at the front. It was a very warm atmosphere.

The Repertoire

William Spaulding, Director of the Royal Opera House Choir, was responsible for selecting the repertoire. The first concert was held in March 2023, dedicated to the Year of Ukraine's Resilience in the War and aimed at raising charitable funds to support Ukrainians.

The repertoire included Ukrainian folk songs and prayers, choral numbers from various classical operas that sing about love for the motherland, faith in a bright future, and, of course, the Ukrainian anthem.

"There is a very beautiful church in Covent Garden, St. Paul's. And when we sang one of the ancient prayers with the choir members for the first time during the rehearsal, in this incredible acoustics, I could not sing – I just stood there and cried. They were tears of joy and inspiration when you feel like you are part of something very important. During the concert, the audience was already crying with us. And after the emotional experience, people want to help, they emotionally understand what horrors are happening in Ukraine and that we have to do everything to stop it," Dudnik shared her impressions.

While the first season introduced Ukraine, Ukrainian music and culture, the second season has already collected the best Christmas traditions, including the inherent Ukrainian carols. The unique asset of this project was a thick collection of sheet music from the Ukrainian diaspora in the United States, which contained 500 carols.

According to Olha, only Ukrainian folk ritual songs have preserved the division of carols by themes before and after the birth of Christ. In other words,



Ukrainian carols commemorate the time when there was only earth and sky.

"We helped to choose the repertoire and translate the songs. We took part in a competition to select presenters who would present the themes of each section of the concert. For me personally, it was the pre-Christian songs that became a discovery, because they touched me to the core. The welcoming speech before the choir's performance revealed to the British not only the content of the carols, but also mentioned our Ukrainian language, human values, and reminded us that there is a war in Ukraine. We were very touched by the speech of a Ukrainian migrant worker who had to leave her children for five years and only later, after receiving British citizenship, was able to reunite with them. Her speech introduced the horror song "Don't Cry, Rachel" about children killed in Jerusalem, about a cuckoo who left her children behind. And now in Ukraine mothers are losing their children. No one remained indifferent to what they heard. Everyone was also surprised to learn that the famous "Shchedryk" is a Ukrainian song," says Dudnik.

In her opinion, a real battle of cultural diplomacy is going on, when the choir members were compared to warriors of music, light and goodness.

"We are not directly on the front line, but we can draw attention to Ukraine and engage people. They are already emotionally connected to Ukraine, they know Ukrainians personally, about the country itself, and they are already of-

fering to collect donations – to resist. And this is already a significant influence on the international community. This is a separate front – cultural.

The cultural front

The Kyiv Opera House was able to implement a unique project that touches the soul and has a huge reach. According to Olha Dudnik, the project is constantly heard in such global media as The Times and the BBC. On Christmas and New Year's Eve, CNN broadcast a story every four hours featuring the choir's performance and interviews with Ukrainian choir members who shared their memories of Ukraine and talked about the war. It is safe to say that millions of viewers, listeners and readers learned about Ukraine.

"In the first season we had a concert at the Royal Opera House. We performed at two human rights conferences, where we performed several numbers without opera singers. We started our second season with a performance at Bradford Cathedral, which has one of the largest Ukrainian communities. These are all global performances. Then we had another concert at the Royal Opera House. And the final candlelight concert was at the Ukrainian Church on January 7th. And these last two concerts were the most emotionally moving. The concerts were sold out. There is a tradition here: on New Year's Eve carols are sung in every church, and people like to go to such concerts. And imagine that on such a New Year's Eve the Ro-

yal Opera House performs Ukrainian carols. Art is a channel through which you can attract attention, the main thing is to find a subject that touches people's hearts. And we were able to draw attention to the war," says Dudnik, noting that the project is fully fulfilling its mission.

The organizers admitted that they had not expected such an impact and such a large audience. After all, the main audience at the concert was not Ukrainians, but the British. The organizers also did not expect such attention and response. And if last year, according to Olha, they wondered if the project would continue, now they know for sure.

"We are honored to be working with members of the Ukrainian community in London as Ukraine approaches a difficult milestone in the war. It is clear that the arts truly unite communities, especially in times of great difficulty. By singing together with the Royal Opera House Choir, the project creates a sense of community spirit in a way that only music can do," said Gillian Barker, Director of Learning & Participation at the Royal Opera House.

Most importantly, such a unique and large-scale project will continue and allow the world to get to know Ukraine even better. It is also exciting that the project participants will return to Ukraine and the experience of singing in the choir will inspire them to continue their cultural mission at home – to restore Ukrainians through music therapy and singing.

RUSSIA PLAYS ON ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT

Anastasiia Krupka

Even before the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine, Russia was actively spreading fake news and propaganda accusing the United States of being responsible. *"The U.S. will create a colonial administration in Ukraine", "Russia is besieged by biolabs, all over the CIS countries. The Americans are now trying to create a biological weapons belt around us," "The United States is planning a full-scale war with Russia",* Russian media wrote. Since then, the narratives have changed. For example, the Center for Strategic Communications noted that Russia is now promoting the falsehood that the United States believes the war in Ukraine will end on Russia's terms after the *"complete collapse of the armed forces"*. In doing so, Russian media refer to a military expert, former US Marine Brian Berletik. However, the Center emphasizes that he is a pseudo-expert who spreads Russian propaganda. In particular, he says that the Ukrainian military is "killing its own people to frame Russia." "Hromada" spoke with Olena Holub, an analyst at the Institute of Mass Information, about how Russian propaganda has changed since February 2022, what goals it now pursues, and whether we can predict the enemy's further actions by analyzing these narratives.

How has Russian propaganda changed since the start of full-scale war?

One of the current narratives that the occupiers are spreading in their media is about the Ukrainian counteroffensive. The propagandists claim that it allegedly failed because of the failed US strategy. They say that the US military has no experience in similar conflicts and is pushing Ukrainian soldiers into fruitless attacks. In addition, there are now many Russian narratives that Ukraine is a bargaining chip for both the United States and the European Union. That is, they do not mind sacrificing its territories.

At the same time, Russia is still using the narratives it has used in the past. For example, propagandists claim that the United States allegedly provoked the war in Ukraine in order to weaken the position of the occupying country. They claim that it is the United



States that is destroying the Ukrainian people. It is surprising that this does not cause dissonance in Russian society, since it is they who are killing us. In addition, the propagandists continue to accuse the Ukrainian armed forces of shelling their territory. According to them, this would not have happened if the West had not supplied Ukraine with weapons.

This year presidential elections will be held in a number of EU and US countries. According to the head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, they will be the main target for countries like Russia, which are trying to spread disinformation and undermine democracy. Have you already noticed an intensification of propaganda on this issue?

Yes, there are narratives that the US is getting weaker because of political differences between Republicans and Democrats. Such messages play into Russia's hands, so they never miss an opportunity to discuss this issue in their media. (Propagandists are betting that after Trump's victory, the United States may stop supporting Europe and even withdraw from NATO: "This is hinted at in Trump's election program, which says that 'we will finish the process we started last time – the process of reassessing the tasks and purpose of the alliance' – ed.).

Before the full-scale invasion, the Russians actively "pumped" their citizens with hatred of Ukraine through propaganda shows, dehumanizing and demonizing Ukrainians. Can these narratives we are currently following predict Russia's next steps in the war in general?

I think it is important to study Russian propaganda and narratives because they can show, to a certain extent, what the occupiers are currently seeking, what societies they want to influence with their messages. Even before and in the first months of the full-scale invasion, the propagandists focused primarily on reducing the humanity of Ukrainians. These were, for example, narratives about "Nazis" (propagandists and Russian diplomats spread information that the medical worker and volunteer Yulia Payevska with the call sign "Taira" was a Ukrainian Nazi murderer who killed civilians, so it was unacceptable to give her the International Women of Courage Award – ed. There was a lot of hate speech directed not only at the armed forces but also at civilians. So this propaganda was aimed more at its own consumers.

Instead, I assume that the narratives the Russians are now spreading are also aimed at Ukrainian society. After all, it is Ukrainians who are actively discussing them. For example, the narratives say that Ukrainians are supposedly unwilling to join the armed forces, that they are deserters, that Ukraine will fight to the last Ukrainian, that Volodymyr Zelenskyy is killing Ukrainians. These theses no longer carry direct hatred towards society, but they can incite people to a certain confrontation.

What do you think are the reasons for these changes?

I think that the obvious change in propaganda may indicate a change in tactics. In particular, we are talking about a change in the subject of perception. Because Ukrainians did not

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take the previous messages seriously. After all, you can tell us as much as you want that we are Nazis or that we have fighting geese in our laboratories, but it will only elicit laughter. Instead, the messages and narratives being promoted now are capable of dividing the people of Ukraine.

Reuters, citing U.S. intelligence, writes that Moscow is using spies, social media and Russian state media to undermine trust in the media and in presidents. What are the most common ways propaganda is spread?

Right now, the biggest source of Russian propaganda is social media. It's almost impossible to block access to them in the modern world: there are so many of them, and they're all very diverse. And any ban will provoke people to circumvent it. And this can be done with the help of many programs. Moreover, propaganda narratives can

be spread not only through news or analytical journalism, but also through entertainment content: music, movies, or literature (last year, the propaganda film "Militia" made by Russian propagandists was found on Apple TV. This is a TV show about the "Donbass rebels" that glorifies the war crimes of the Russian army, which is recognized as a terrorist organization in the EU. The Russians also released an action film, "The Best in Hell," about the battles for Mariupol through the eyes of the Wagner PMC. The film's producer, Sergei Shcheglov, said in an interview that the film's characters on both sides speak Russian because it is "a kind of civil war.")

How effective do you think the United States can be in countering this propaganda? And what does it take?

Actually, it is very difficult to counter propaganda because it appeals to

emotions that dull people's critical thinking. It is easiest to deal with propaganda that is easy to refute, such as the use of infected war mosquitoes. The same cannot be said for half-truths (misleading statements that contain some element of truth – ed.) or manipulative practices (demonizing the enemy, generalizations, etc.). For example, it is not easy, if not impossible, to refute the message that the United States has real influence on Ukraine or that Ukraine is a colony of the United States.

This can be countered only by developing critical thinking in people, increasing their education and their desire not only to perceive information, but also to analyze it and draw the right conclusions. Besides, I think that quality journalism can also help to defeat propaganda.

WE NEED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO UKRAINE NOW, OR WE HAVE TO FIGHT TOMORROW

Karyna Nikitishina

The first month of 2024 has passed, and the bill on military aid to Ukraine has not been approved by Congress since the fall of 2023. Despite the fact that US President Joe Biden presented a national security project worth more than \$100 billion, of which \$61 billion is earmarked for Ukraine, the issue of this aid has been stalled for several months. And with voters focused on their country's internal problems, the war in Ukraine has faded into the background. At the same time, the Ukrainian military is facing a period of total ammunition conservation and a war with equipment that sometimes cannot withstand the Ukrainian cold. And civilians who have nothing to do with the military continue to die with each massive bombardment of what the Kremlin calls "critical infrastructure and decision-making centers."

Massive Russian shelling on December 29, 2023, and January 2, 2024, forced Ukrainians to celebrate the New Year holidays in shelters and bomb shelters. One of the largest attacks since the start of the full-scale invasion occurred recently, on January 23: at least 120 people were injured that day. The Kharkiv region suffered the greatest losses, with 15 of the 19 people killed in the entire country. An 8-year-old girl and her mother were among the dead. In addition to Kharkiv region, the occupiers are shelling the de-occupied part of Kherson region every day. As usual, the position of Russian politicians and media remains unclear, as they keep claiming that such losses are the result of the destruction of Russian missiles and drones by Ukrainian air defense forces, and that shells are supposedly always aimed only at military infrastructure. That is why "not whole missiles, but their fragments" fall in residential areas of cities. This lie is not even believed by a significant number of Russians themselves, who openly rejoice over the deaths of Ukrainian civilians on social media and cynically call the shelling fireworks. It can be assumed that the "we don't shoot at civilians" narrative is no longer so much for the benefit of the Russian people as for our individual Western partners, who still believe that the Russian leadership is decent and does not give criminal orders to

kill ordinary people.

We can see, especially in the last month, that Ukrainian losses are not a priority for the United States. The time has come when the solution of domestic economic and other problems is more important for the voters than the problems of distant Ukraine. This is to be expected, because on the eve of elections, every country is most interested in its own well-being. "In the United States, people always vote for the economy, for their own safety, against crime and drugs. For many Americans, the role of the United States in the world is an important issue, but it is definitely not a priority. It is very important that American lawmakers also start talking to their constituents. With those who never watch the news on the mainstream channels, with those who don't read about the world on social media. What will happen to your personal life if we don't support Ukraine properly? How will you feel, whether you will be safe, whether inflation will jump, whether the price of gasoline at your gas station will be 20% higher, whether you will get favorable terms at the bank for a mortgage. Explaining on your fingers how this is going to affect your life is something we fundamentally lack in the United States today," said former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin.

Politico's scenario is interesting not only for Ukraine, but for the world in general, for the possible victory in this year's US elections of Donald Trump, who has already declared that he will not come to the aid of Europe if one of the NATO countries is attacked. According to Politico, as well as many Ukrainian and foreign experts, Putin will be able to seize the Baltic states fairly quickly. Some experts believe that an attack on one of the EU countries, most likely Estonia, will take place regardless of the outcome of the US elections and could happen as early as next year. But Europe is not ready for war, and it will not be ready in a year or two, although some of its countries are already training intensively for future battles. Even Ireland, which has been neutral for years and is far from Russia, has decided to increase conscription and invest in its own defense capabilities. But even now, the Irish armed forces number

less than 8,000 people. This is an incredibly small number compared to the Ukrainian army, and even smaller compared to the US army. Some countries, on the other hand, do not want to see the danger because their authorities have been flirting with Putin for years and have ties to Russian business. Hungarian politicians, for example, are concerned only with their own financial security, when they should be asking the older generation how they remember the events of 1956.

The frontline lacks weapons and ammunition, and the January 23 missile attack, according to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, shows that they also need more air defense systems and missiles. EU industry is unable to produce enough, as Ukraine's needs are much greater than those of European countries. A CNN report near Bakhmut illustrated the situation, where the Ukrainian military openly talked about the impossibility of fully performing their combat missions due to a lack of ammunition. The supply gap is 10:1 in favor of Russia. Due to the need to save money, the Ukrainian military is forced to be much more inventive than the Russians. Some of the equipment and ammunition supplied cannot withstand winter conditions and freeze. Soldiers told a CNN journalist that because of the ammunition shortage, they are using any available Paladin shells, including frozen and smoke shells. A US M777 howitzer sits idle most of the day, firing no more than 20 rounds. Last summer, twice as many were fired at the occupiers, and most of the shells were American-made.

According to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, if Congress does not approve aid to Ukraine, the war will be lost in a few weeks. Although the current situation is disappointing, such a prediction is too pessimistic. In addition to U.S. aid, Ukraine is expecting a 50 billion euro package, which has been blocked by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. However, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that with or without Hungary's consent, the funds would be approved on February 1. However, if the U.S. Congress does not approve the 2024 aid package in the near future, the Ukrainian military will face an even greater shortage of weapons and

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ammunition for Western air defense systems. The lack of timely approval of military aid to Ukraine has led to a period of "stupor": our military is forced to hold the line, waiting for Russian offensive actions. The Russian invaders, with the support of North Korea, which supplies a lot of, perhaps not always high quality, but deadly ammunition, will try to advance after the cold weather that usually occurs in February. Sufficiently frozen ground will allow tanks and armored vehicles still stuck in the mud to advance.

The aggressor country is already on the warpath and ready to fight for at least three years. The Telegraph notes that Russia's manipulation of the accuracy of indicators for propaganda purposes does not allow to accurately determine the scale of the country's

transition to a war economy. However, even according to official data, it is known that Russia's spending on the war has increased by up to 6%, which is about a third of all Russian budget expenditures. That is more than education and health care. According to The Telegraph, new Lancet drones are being manufactured daily in former Russian shopping malls and bakeries. Russians are urged to work 6 days a week and volunteer in the factories to surpass the technical skills of the Ukrainian military with the surplus of resources. Videos are freely available of even Russian schoolchildren assembling 3D parts for grenades and turnstiles.

The daily threat to civilian lives in this war is more than real, despite the enemy's promises from the first days

of the full-scale invasion not to target residential areas and civilian infrastructure. Gradually, the world is beginning to realize that several other European countries are under threat, be it the Baltic States or Poland. The West faces a choice: help Ukraine today or fight tomorrow. A Russian victory will send a message to all totalitarian regimes that they can do whatever they want and get nothing in return. After all, large human casualties are not really painful for China, North Korea, or Iran, unlike us. The most effective way to avoid new conflicts is for Ukraine to win now. Russia's defeat in this war is a guarantee of the security of the democratic world and its values, which the United States has always shared.

FOLLOW THROUGH ON EVERY CONVERSATION

Stories of Cyborgs who returned to war

Bohdana Sadomska

The Cyborgs survived. The concrete did not.

On January 20, the anniversary of the bombing of the new terminal of Donetsk airport, Ukraine celebrates the Day of the Cyborg. It is the day of the defenders of DAP, who for 242 days – from May 26, 2014 to January 23, 2015 – resisted the Russian occupying forces and separatists.

Seven years have passed since those battles, and many cyborgs who managed to survive, some to return from captivity, others to undergo medical treatment, took up arms again with the beginning of the full-scale invasion. One of them, Viktor Shyian (Popeye), recalls that in January 2021, traditionally gathered in Derazhne at the graves of their comrades-in-arms, Hero of Ukraine Ivan Zubkov (Crab) and Vasyi Hryhoriev (Chemist), they unanimously answered the volunteer's question "Will there be an escalation?" in the affirmative. "We have unfinished business. It will have to be finished," says Popeye, who is currently serving in the special forces, although he was demobilized with a group II disability after the DAP.

For him, a civilian until then – either a construction worker or an electrical engineer – the war began in August 2014. He jokes that it was his sister's birthday, so he had to go to her, but he ended up at the Zhytomyr training ground. In October, after the training, they arrived in the zone and were stationed in Kostiantynivka. "On November 29, our guys entered the new terminal and control tower for the first time. We were supposed to change them in three or four days, but we did it much later," recalls Papay, who stayed at the DAP for 12 days, from December 12 to 24. "The next and last time I went in was January 16. We were supposed to go in, get a foothold, and wait for help. We were planning an attack to clear Donetsk, but the attack was suppressed. There was heavy fog. We fought continuously for four days. No one came to us. A box (armored vehicle – ed.) came and we loaded the wounded and the dead. The commander and his men drove past us and went straight to the 'separatists' and were captured. And then, on January 19,



there was the first explosion. The soldiers had to recover quickly and continue the defense. When the second explosion occurred, Popeye lost contact: "Three floors were blown up. Many people died at once, some were moaning under the rubble. We could hear the militants reaching them from below and shooting them. There were 12 Ukrainian soldiers from Popeye's unit, although Viktor counted 53 at most. Popeye himself, who had been out of contact for four days, had already been "buried."

At that time, he says, he survived by taking care of his family and comrades. He had to fight in the war zone to keep his family safe in the rear towns. He also had faith in the people around him. Another DAP defender, Nazariy Chepko (Virniy), who had his first real baptism of fire in the DAP, says that war teaches you to recognize people. You can tell who is cunning and deceitful, and who is sincere, polite and kind, by their eyes. "When you reach for a plate of food – it was some kind of religious holiday – and three other hands reach out to serve you; or when everyone leaves the last dumpling for the other, despite their wishes – this is only possible in war."

His spirit was also strengthened by the idea that he could make history. He could stand in an outpost of the Ukrainian war: "Until February 24, it was the biggest battle since the Second World War on the territory of modern Europe. There was no bigger one. And I had the opportunity to defend my country and take part in such a great battle. Someday someone will read books about it, but I could write them from the inside."

He was 20 years old, so they didn't let him join the DAP right away, even though he asked for it – "too green". But when the airport spent its last days under Ukrainian control, they asked who would go. Four people from the whole unit left. Including Vernyi. He had been to the weather station near the runway twice. The first time was with his father, and it was the hardest: chaos, gunfire, and a loved one you care about and want to protect. After the terminals were blown up, the weather station came under increasing fire – the enemy knew it was the only position through which they could get the wounded who were crawling across the runway out of the terminal. It was this position that was later called the "Last Outpost of Donetsk Airport", and a documentary film of the same name was dedicated to these battles. With the start of the full-scale



invasion, Nazariy Chepko returned to the war, where he was wounded and is now being treated in hospital.

Both airport defenders, speaking about the difference between the so-called ATO/JFO and the current war, naturally emphasize the larger scale and quantity of resources involved on both sides. "Those who mobilized in mid-2015 and 2016 may say that the so-called ATO was a "cakewalk". But we should have tried it first – to go through Debaltsevo, Ilovaisk, DAP...", Virnyi believes. Popeye says that prisoners were abused then, as they are now, but not in such numbers: "The scale has shown everything. Before, not everyone wanted to see it, because not everyone was affected. Something was deliberately hidden. Some people wanted the truth, but were they ready for it? Now multiply that

piece by the perimeter of the state border. Now it is the same DAP, only bigger". But if we had changed our approach, the army would have been strengthened. Virnyi, for example, believes that, first of all, middle and senior commanders should not be officers who have graduated from a military college, but those who have more combat experience. And secondly, the economy should be put on a military track and rely on technology: "The army is based on human death, and in the 21st century we should fight technologically. Now it manifests itself in a patchwork, on a voluntary basis. If the European countries and NATO would give us more and better of what they already have and have in stock – they don't manufacture new stuff – we could win much faster. The army is not just about people, it is about wea-

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pons and technology. The enemy, he says, is still throwing bodies and flesh, but they have started producing missiles, FPV drones and weapons much more intensively because they have realized that a blitzkrieg will not work – they have to take them by attrition. They are producing a lot and with high quality."

The people who have been fighting since 2014 are slightly different from those who joined the army after the full-scale invasion. Mostly by experience, of course, but not only. The former are more ideological and nationalistic. "Today, many have voluntarily mobilized, but not in combat units. Back then, there were not so many rear positions. Now many have gone to the TOT, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhya, Kherson, Zhytomyr, Chernihiv regions, because they have housing and businesses there, which they have worked for half

their lives and which they want to protect. And then there were people from Lviv who went to Donbass, who realized that it would not reach their homes," Nazariy says about the majority, because there are many exceptions. But while some were looking for ways to go abroad, others were building and standing in long lines at military registration and enlistment offices. Viktor believes that if Ukraine has resisted such a machine for almost two years, there is something to think about: "No one has ever had such land operations as Russia's war against Ukraine. Two years of land warfare... I don't know what other state with resources like ours is able to resist a state with resources like Russia's. We have already shown who is who.

"However, if the conflict had not been frozen in 2015-2016, and if the army had been strengthened in a year

or two or three, and weapons had been produced, then in 2019-2020 we could have at least returned Donbass and prepared for the de-occupation of Crimea. Then we had to produce missiles. A lot of missiles," Vyrnyi says. "And what about now? We will still win, but at what cost? How long will it take? How many casualties will it cause? It depends on the help of our Western partners. Because if, God forbid, Ukraine falls, Russia will only spread its wings and realize that it can occupy other countries with impunity. It will get ready and start with the Baltic states. Russia is a bloodthirsty beast that understands only force: when it bites, you have to knock out its teeth.

Most of his fellow Cyborgs, says Popeye, have returned to duty with the start of the full-scale invasion. Unfortunately, many have already died.

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Go to the performance of "Fish Don't Cry"

Myroslav Hrehk

In San Francisco, a group of actors and theater people have come together to create a unique performance called "Fish Don't Cry". This is a story told by Marta, an actress from the Mariupol Theatre. It is a story of loss, anger, strength and weakness, despair and faith, love and tenderness.

Our correspondent Myroslav Hrehk interviewed Olena Bilyak, the director of the play.

Myroslav (M.): Tell us how you got the idea to create such a play.

Olena (O.): I worked with teenagers in Lviv and we had a school drama group. When we came here, I also started working with children and teenagers from the diaspora. We produce a play every year. Even when there was a quarantine, we did performances online. One time I was contacted by a friend on Facebook. I knew she was involved in theater, but I hadn't seen her performances. She said she had written a play and wanted to send it to me to read. I agreed and she sent me the script. I knew that she lived in Nuremberg, Germany, and that her name was Elena Petrovskaya, a playwright and screenwriter.

I read the text in an hour, was impressed, and wrote to her saying that I was just fascinated by the power of her play. And she asked me if I wanted to direct it. I wrote back that this was out of the question because I work with teenagers and this is an adult play, and we are an amateur theater that does not have the resources for such a production. Yelena replied: "You should look for adult actors. That's how I got the idea that maybe I should look for adult actors. I started thinking about who here in the Bay Area could play it. I remembered that we knew Lana Shcherbakova, that she was a professional actress who was also very interested in Ukrainian issues and had organized charity auctions. I thought I should invite Lana to participate in the play and sent her a file with the script. Lana replied that it was her dream role and we started looking for other actors to play in the play. Only three actors were needed.

That's how the work started. Then I went to my director at the Jewish Com-



munity Center of San Francisco and told her about the idea and our needs. The center gave us a space to rehearse.

Then we – me, Lana and my director – realized that we were not enough, that we needed to find someone else who could help. As a result, a team of extraordinary professionals came together, which is nothing short of a miracle. People come, agree on the first contact, spend their time, spend a lot of energy, invest their own money. We are making the play a charity show, and I realized this from the very beginning, because it is about Mariupol, about the war, and it is a very powerful message to people that we cannot relax and think that somehow it will be there. We have to realize that the victory of Ukraine depends on everyone.

M.: Tell us, why is the name of the

play "Fish Don't Cry"?

O.: I will tell you. But first I would like to say that this is the story of an actress from the Mariupol theater who loses her family during the evacuation: her husband and two children. And she goes crazy because of this terrible tragedy, this terrible fate, when her family is destroyed and everything around her seems to go crazy. Only Marta and her aquarium got out of the car in which her family died. There are stories where something very fragile survived and something very strong was destroyed. There are fish in this aquarium. We don't know if there were fish or not – maybe it's just her imagination and she convinces herself that she has become a fish because fish have a very short memory, only 5 seconds. And she tries not to remember

what happened to her. This play is a monologue of a crazy woman telling her story and the story of Mariupol. There is not only a military tragedy, but there is a love story and a story of betrayal, there are many stories. This play is so diverse. The main idea that the play starts with is that the fish once cried, and that made the water in the sea salty, and they cried all their tears, they have nothing left to cry about, now people have to cry.

M.: How many people are involved in the troupe in general, how many actors, how many assistants?

O.: There are three actors, and the main role of Marta is played by the actress Lana Shcherbakova. But it's not a one-woman show, because there are 2 other characters involved. Marta's lover is played by actor Yuriy Lokoman, who helps her, is always by her side, understands everything, but keeps silent all the time so as not to make her nervous, and lets her speak. The play also features ballerina Daria Yushkevich, who expresses all her emotions only through movement and dance.

M.: But you must have other people who help you, volunteers who help to organize the performance.

O.: Yes, there are such people, a very large group. I can't even list them all now, but we have a set designer, a costume designer, a composer, a videographer, working scenes, advertising managers, and so on. It is interesting that we have help not only here, locally, but also from outside the country: for example, the lighting score was painted by a lighting designer from Lviv, one of my former students, who now works as a lighting designer at the Voskreseniye Theater. The photographer Yevhen Sosnovsky, the author of the book Mariupol Diary, gave us the rights to the photos that we will use in the performance. The band Dakha Braha gave us permission to use their music, and our composer is working on it and incorporating it into the play. Kyiv-based artist Bohdana Chilikina allowed us to use her painting, which has already gone viral on the Internet. You've probably seen it – it's a red card, bloody, like an alarm card with the inscription "People are here". We used it to make flyers for the performance and use it in the video. A lot of people are helping us, even remotely.

M.: That's good, but do you have any official financial sponsors?

O.: Absolutely not. Everything is done for free, on a voluntary basis. The stage and the premises for the dress rehearsal and the performance itself



were provided to us free of charge by the You Theater, and we consider this a form of sponsorship. We will perform the play there in Ukrainian. And for the Russian performance, the Jewish Community Center Palo Alto provided us with the space almost free of charge. The JCC San Francisco provided us with a place to rehearse and store our sets free of charge. All of this is

important because it is notoriously expensive to rent space. Also, everyone is working for free. The artist who made the set bought everything she needed at her own expense. We tried to raise money for her, but she refused. Someone else bought some other equipment, someone brought their computer from home, someone gave us an hourglass, a beautiful, big one.

So it's all coming together on a volunteer basis. Our goal is not to waste anything, so that the money we have and collect goes to Ukraine.

M.: How long have you been rehearsing?

O.: Around Independence Day I received the play from the author and her answer. And after that we started rehearsing, somewhere in late August, early September, when the school year began. And in September, October, November, December, January, we rehearse twice a week for about four and a half months. I would say we work very hard, because before that we do something online almost every day.

M.: Where can I buy tickets and how much do they cost?

O.: If we're talking about the Ukrainian premiere, you can buy tickets like this: find our announcement on Facebook and there's a link to a foundation organization that helps refugees who lost their homes inside Ukraine, then you have to go further and give them a donation or donations, and then it's considered that you've already bought a ticket. If you go there, the ticket is \$40. For the elderly and students, it's \$20. If you give a donation, you have to write that it is for a ticket to our performance. They give us information every week: who bought how many tickets. The You Theater has a small room for 70 people. We have a person at the entrance with a list and we let the audience in. We also sell discounted tickets for refugees.

M.: Tell us something about yourself, because everything depends on the director.

O.: Before I came to the United States, I worked as a teacher, but it's not a very profitable business both in Ukraine and in America. So I worked in social institutions for 20 years, and this year I retired, not because of my

age, but because of the length of my service. Now I have a small pension from them. In addition, for many years I have been teaching on Saturdays at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, where there is a music school called Tikvah (Hope). And during the week, I now teach Ukrainian and Russian language and theater skills privately online. I have always been interested in theater. When I was studying at the University of Lviv at the Faculty of Philology, I acted in the student theater and studied a little theater theory. There was even a teacher from another institute who came and gave lectures on stage language, so I have experience in this field. When I started working, I started a drama club with teenagers at my school. They are adults now, but we are still friends. So I brought that experience here. But this is the first time I'm directing a play for adults. We plan to have the premiere in Ukrainian on Saturday, February 3, at 7 p.m. at the You Theater, and the second performance in Russian on Sunday, February 11, at the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center.

M.: You said that the second performance will be in Russian. You know, this is the language of the occupier and we do not accept it and we hate it. Why did you make such a decision?

O.: You know, the play was originally written in Russian, it's about Mariupol, which was mostly Russian-speaking. I told the author that there is a big Ukrainian community here and it should be translated into Ukrainian. And we did, and the first premiere will be in Ukrainian. But on the other hand, people from Mariupol or Donbass, who have now fled the war, find it easier to understand in Russian. Yes, for now, because I'm sure that in the future they will be able to speak Ukrainian fluently. Also, there is a large Rus-

sian-speaking diaspora here in San Francisco: immigrants from Kazakhstan, the Baltics, Armenia, Georgia, etc.. And we want them to see our play and learn the truth about what happened in Mariupol during the Russian attack, the truth about the horrors of war. And to give not only moral but also material support to the refugees. Yes, they will come, they are already buying tickets for the Russian-language performance. In addition, we are now working to have both performances subtitled in English so that Americans can come and understand what we are talking about, so that friends can invite their American friends or mixed families to come to us.

M.: In conclusion, what would you say to future audiences, what would you tell them to come and see your show?

O.: I would like to say that after 2 years of war, and this is probably the worst thing, we are starting to get used to it, but war is not the norm to get used to it. We have to do everything we can to help the military, the war victims and the refugees. We shouldn't help on the principle that it's going on somewhere else and I'll give a little bit and it'll be there somehow and it'll end somehow and it won't affect me. We have to help them understand that there is a long, difficult road ahead of us, which we all have to go through, and which must end with the victory of Ukraine. Only victory, otherwise there will be no Ukraine. The world may survive if it does not shoot, but Ukraine will not survive. So come to us, donate, help in any way you can, and we will definitely win.

M.: Well, thank you for the informative interview and see you at the play.

O.: Thank you very much. And goodbye. We are waiting for you.



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STANFORD AWAITS!

MEET 42 PARTICIPANTS OF THE STANFORD IGNITE UKRAINE PROGRAM

Selection for the Stanford Ignite Ukraine Program is complete. The CfE accelerator is ready to announce 42 Ukrainian small and medium-sized business owners who will begin their studies at one of the world's top business schools in February. The program will last 7 weeks, 3 of which the participants will spend at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Immersing themselves in the Silicon Valley community, the participants will have the opportunity to rethink and develop their businesses. Entrepreneurs will gain essential knowledge and hands-on management tools to drive transformative changes, enhancing their ability to navigate the challenges Ukrainian businesses face. Upon completion of their studies, they will be able to apply the acquired experience and bring ambitious ideas to life within their existing enterprises in Ukraine, which is the objective of Stanford Ignite Ukraine.

"In less than a month, about 1,000 candidates applied for the program, which once again confirms the positive dynamics of Ukrainian business recovery despite the full-scale invasion. This demonstrates their resilience, adaptability, and determination to thrive under any circumstance. We're delighted that, alongside our partners, we can help Ukrainian entrepreneurs become part of the Stanford GSB community and provide an opportunity designed to be an impetus for changes in their thinking, teams, business, and country," shared Ivan Petrenko, CEO of CfE accelerator.

Kyiv, Lviv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Ivano-Frankivsk, Dnipro, Donetsk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia — the program received applications from various regions of Ukraine. Regarding the type of business, service companies prevailed over manufacturing ones. More than a third of the candidates had entrepreneurial experience of both 6-10 years (36%) and over 10 years (38%). Such statistics indicate that Ukrainian business leaders understand the value of lifelong learning and the importance of continuous investment in their knowledge.

However, the primary selection criterion was the entrepreneurs' motivation and intention to enhance their businesses, for example, to scale, launch new products/services, implement innovations, attract investments, or enter new markets. The decision proved to be quite challenging.

Here is the list of selected participants for the Stanford Ignite Ukraine

Program:

- Svitlana Paveletska – Knigolove, publishing house and bookstore
- Sergii Shevchenko – ARAMIS, manufacturer of laser cutting machines for metal
- Vladyslav Konovets – Nanit Robot,

company developing robotics, electronics, and programming, Edtech solutions for children and adults

- Andrii Yaremchuk – Leonis Marble, manufacturer of natural stone products
- Bohdana Sydorenko – Nika-Text Plus, manufacturer of uniforms and military clothing
- Mykhailo Obod – NETRONIC, manufacturer of laser tag equipment
- Kyrylo Filatov – ECONAD, company that develops and implements nature conservation technologies
- Kristina Haika – Gavra, healthy snacks manufacturer
- Artem Vyunnyk – Athlon Avia, manufacturer of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)
- Andriy Bandrivskyi – Gorgany, distributor and manufacturer of equipment for hiking and sports
- Yurii Tustanovskiyi – rekava, manufacturer of coffee-based biodegradable products
- Julia Solovey – Gres Todorchuk, communications agency with a focus on cultural, social, and educational initiatives
- Grygorii Zeleniuk – Darlisad, frozen fruits producer
- Olesia Khoma – Yedynka DGTL, digital marketing agency
- Ruslana Rymarska – Budmo Zdorovi (Smakuli TM), healthy sweets manufacturer
- Oleksandra Antsiunas – Spell Chocolate, Belgian chocolate producer
- Roman Konovalov – Hermes, company specializing in sunflower seeds processing
- Rostyslav Kulyk – Gastroli.ua, platform for events booking
- Ievgen Podliesnykh – Underwood Brewery, beer and non-alcohol drinks manufacturer
- Anna Knyzhenko – dukachi, jewelry manufacturer
- Yuriy Tabachyn – EdPro, manufacturer of educational equipment and e-textbooks
- Olha Zharova – The EngL, online English language school
- Serhii Stetsenko – Panfruit Ukraine, manufacturer of sublimated products
- Volodymyr Filimonov – Diptar, manufacturer of miscanthus and wood pellets
- Oleksandr Karas – Shafran Spice, producer of functional and flavoring mixtures for the meat industry
- Nataliia Pavliuchok – LA BOTANICA, manufacturer of frozen starters and desserts
- Fursov Mykyta – Cartonic.store, Tatton.me, 1DEA.me, producer of 3D

puzzles, temporary tattoos, and design gifts

- Stanislav Gontovyi – hotline.finance, comparison service and online registration of insurance products
- Yuliia Logvin – JUL, manufacturer of branding clothes
- Andrii Rodkin – Glamping UA, manufacturer of glamping tents
- Olena Shyrokovska – Hlib Ye!, bakery
- Olena Zanchkovska – The Gradient, digital product design agency
- Hanna Mazur – Happy Monday, platform for exploring the job market
- Iuliia Lisovska – Tivoli, manufacturer of wooden furniture
- Anton Avrynskyi – Liki24.com, search and delivery service for health products
- Viktoria Voroniuk – Kapelou, robotic equipment manufacturer and supplier of integrated warehouse solutions
- Viktoriia Maslova – VESNA, manufacturer of herbal cosmetics
- Mykhailo Ganchuk – Promavtomatika Vinnytsia, developer and producer of electrical equipment
- Viacheslav Zhyla – Supertask Theatrical School, school of theater
- Roman Khomchko – Khomsteel Group, sandwich panel supply and installation company
- Andrii Vasyliiev – Briolight, manufacturer of electronic equipment for interactive, sensory rooms and inclusion classes
- Andriy Chuba – Pikart, lamps manufacturer

The CfE accelerator team welcomes 42 participants and looks forward to the first results of their businesses' transformation on the way to Ukraine's economic recovery and rebuilding. Furthermore, the program organizers are ready to announce that Stanford Ignite Ukraine will be held for the second time, and the next participant enrollment will begin in the autumn of 2024 – an excellent opportunity for those who didn't manage to join the program this time.

The Stanford Ignite Ukraine program was launched by the CfE accelerator in collaboration with the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, with support from the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine, the USAID Competitive Economy Program in Ukraine (USAID CEP), and the Ukrainian Catholic University.

The USAID Competitive Economy Program in Ukraine supports Ukrainian businesses in increasing competitiveness in Ukraine's domestic and international markets, assists in building a simplified and transparent business climate, and provides Ukrainian companies with opportunities to take advantage of international trade.

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Dress Code "Kyiv Moda"

Tickets: \$75

[https://www.facebook.com/
events/398977609465215/](https://www.facebook.com/events/398977609465215/)

20 FEB REMEMBRANCE DAY OF THE HEROES OF THE HEAVENLY HUNDRED

24 FEB AUTOMAIDAN RALLY FOR UKRAINE'S VICTORY – NA- TIONAL EVENT

**Ukrainian American Coordinating
Council and 9 others**

Where: Civic Center Plaza, 355
McAllister St. San Francisco, CA
94102

When: Saturday, 12:00 PM – 2:45
PM

Join the Ukrainian American
Coordinating Council, Consul
Dmytro Kushneruk and the Ukrainian
Community and Friends of Ukraine in a
powerful show of support for Ukraine!

On the 2nd anniversary weekend
of the war, come together to fight for
a cause that touches our hearts and
unites us all.

12:00 pm - Gathering at Civic Center

12:30 pm - Caravan Route to be
Announced

2:00 pm - Rally & Speakers - Harry
Bridge Plaza

2:45 pm - Closing with Anthems

[https://www.facebook.com/
events/844859137439082](https://www.facebook.com/events/844859137439082)

24 FEB SKOFKA – NORTH AME- RICAN TOUR 2024

SKOFKA + Dovi + Kozak Siromaha

Where: City Nights, 715 Harrison St,
San Francisco, CA 94107

When: Saturday, 7 PM
Ukrainian rap artist Skofka, the
author of one of the most popular
tracks during wartime, announces the

first tour in North America.

Skofka – representative of the
new wave of Ukrainian culture — is
known for creating a brand new level
of Ukrainian rap. He has garnered
significant acclaim on Spotify, with
over 440,000 monthly listeners. "Chuti
hymn" a song, that he dedicated to his
dead friend has been listened to on
Spotify more than 10 million times and
the music video has gathered over 50
million views on Youtube.

Volodymyr Samolyuk (the artist's
real name) constantly makes
experiments with sound and styles. He
is an intelligent rapper whose main
priority is to create quality music and
prove that Ukrainian rap can sound
cool. The rapper himself writes the
lyrics, arranges them, composes
tracks and sometimes even produces
video clips on his own.

Already at the start of his career
in 2020, he received recognition
from the Ukrainian Music Awards: a
joint track with Kalush – "Dodomu"
("Home") was nominated for
"Collaboration of the Year" from Rap.
ua Awards 2021. Together with Skofka,
his colleagues on the stage, with
whom more than one fit was recorded,
will take part in the tour: DOVI &
KOZAK SIROMAHA.

Tickets: \$65 - \$85

[https://bomond.com/events/skofka-
dovi-kozak-siromaha-san-francisco](https://bomond.com/events/skofka-dovi-kozak-siromaha-san-francisco)

25 FEB UKRAINE'S RESILIENCE AND FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Westminster Events

Where: Westminster Events, 240
Tiburon Blvd., CA 94940

When: Sunday, 3 PM – 5 PM

A Panel discussion on current
challenges, opportunities and updates
from those impacted by Russia's war
on Ukraine.

Tickets: FREE

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