

WAR.RU

by Yurii Rudenko

Foreword

This book by Yurii Rudenko is an important contribution to understanding the current Russian war against Ukrainian. It will be read both at home and internationally with deep interest. It covers the first year of the war during 2014 and early 2015. It tells day by day the shocking and often gory tale of how the war unfolded. It tells of the invasion of Crimea, the initial Russian attempts to create Novorossiia in the east of country and of the eventual invasion by battalions of Russian troops before the battle of Debaltseve, thus saving the Russian backed militants from defeat. It tells in a matter of fact way the battles, and the names of some, but not all, of the Ukrainian heroes. It tells of civilian casualties, of those captured and tortured, and gives numbers of those missing. It tells of the Russian and militant casualties and the Russian daily lies to the world. The author tries hard to put the battles in political and military context for that time although this is often sketchier than I would have liked.

Throughout readers must remember that the Ukrainian army had been destroyed, almost certainly deliberately, during the Yanukovich Presidency and was totally unprepared for what happened in 2014. Out of the 30000 regular soldiers available only 6000 could have been declared combat ready. The Hybrid attack in Crimea was a national shock and the following invasion of the East of Ukraine even more so. The army did remarkable things defending the country.

This is not an easy book to read as the author follows a day by day calendar format in a matter of fact historical manner. The book jumps from one small battle to another

small battle, and back again, all over the front line. But this is as it was, a complex bloody mess. There was no neat and tidy operation designed simply for readers of war books. The author's detailed approach shows clearly that every day the war in the east was in many different locations simultaneously and communications at both the operational and the tactical levels between forces were often poor or impossible. The defence and positioning of Ukrainian troops in this environment can have been no easy thing.

Understanding the narrative can be hard at times because the author has chosen to concentrate upon the tactical level. Arguably he had no choice as this was a small unit war with often only one tank against a few infantrymen. His attention to detail is truly commendable. He marks out the small battles, their significance, and the losses of individual people and vehicles. As you read you can see and feel the numbers of dead and injured grow daily. You can feel the relentlessness of the Russian attacks and the stress of soldiers at all levels of dealing with them. You can feel that the enemy was also not a coherent force. You can feel the importance of artillery to both sides and the sometimes-reckless bravery of the Ukrainian Airforce pilots. But despite the obvious enthusiasm of the author for praising the quality of the Ukrainian forces it is clear that this first year of war was not simply hard and brutal but often unsuccessful. To help understand the events the author put his own interpretation of the political and military significance of events to make sense of the many actions and results. The real judgement of this time must be that by 2015 the country had survived to fight another day with sovereignty severely damaged but ultimately still viable.

Importantly the book highlights the extreme value of the surge of national will that occurred when Russia attacked. People rushed to defend their country and many small new units joined the front line under command of the national guard. This was something Russia never expected, likely never understood, and likely never will understand. People acting of their own free will and risking their lives to defend their country is beyond Putin's comprehension.

The author also lauded the work of the many volunteers who at great physical risk to themselves provided the front line with food, vehicles, and vital equipment like night-sights and generators, and even weapons. I am reminded of a friend of mine who worked as a volunteer cook with a volunteer battalion close to the Russian border and under fire, but she never held a weapon herself.

This book was important for me. I was the first foreign adviser invited into the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence on 13 May 2014. I saw at first hand the struggle of the ministers and staffs to deal with the military deaths and the initial defeats. In Kyiv I met many volunteers fresh from the Maidan who went to the front. Some of these had Afghanistan experience from USSR times but many were poorly trained or in some cases deployed with no training at all. I felt the political tension at government level between those trying to pretend that this was just an anti-terrorist operation and those who could see these were early days of a full-scale war against Russia. I visited the Security Service General in charge of the Anti-Terrorist Operation. He admitted to me that he had no military experience and was relying upon the army to run things. This amateurish approach to war at the strategic level could not have helped the defence in the early days.

The next two years in Kyiv I tried to follow the battles as they happened. The MOD and General Staff gave poor or no public information and I learned most from the Facebook posts of volunteers, soldiers, and families. Those honest Ukrainian sailors who stayed loyal to their country, lost much, and needed to tell their tales to someone also told me much about Crimea — I would add that their own people in the staff apparently had no interest in them at all. I met and talked to combatants when they returned from the front. I have seen the shell ruined Donetsk airport building from just 2km away. It is a stark tribute to Ukrainian bravery. This book helps fill many holes in my knowledge and the author has given me some new and interesting viewpoints.

Here I am 6 years later writing this foreword. I now know many of those mentioned in the book personally as friends and have heard many more tales of those days. The amazing courage and stubborn resistance of so many individuals will have to wait for another book. Sadly, there is a reality that despite the powerful resistance of Ukraine, the territory Russia gained in 2014 is still in their hands. The Ukraine army has lost most of the volunteers from that first year but has since gained a new generation of bright and capable young officers ready to lead their country in whatever comes next. This book should help them understand the style of battle their honourable predecessors faced and to be clear that the next round of war will unlikely be the same. There is now a need to regenerate that 2014 volunteer spirit and fighting

capability through reserve units. The current Ukrainian Generals, even those with recent war experience who understand the problem and are trying to change old traditions, still suffer the consequences of a Soviet education system unable to understand the power of morale or the strength of the individual will. The new generation must fix this problem. Let us hope there is time

A good read Yurii, thank you sir!

*Lt Col (Retd) **Glen Grant**
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the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence in 2014*

1.

Annexation of Crimea

On the chilly night of February 27, 2014, a group of unidentified armed men took control of the Crimean Parliament in Simferopol, capital of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and hung the Russian flag on the roof of the building. Later that morning, another armed group occupied the village of Chonhar in Kherson Oblast, cutting off a key road to the peninsula.



Armored personnel carriers were seen riding across farm fields and men in military uniforms without identification marks started planting mines at the approaches to the bridge leading to Crimea.

Thus began the peninsula's annexation and the beginning of war.



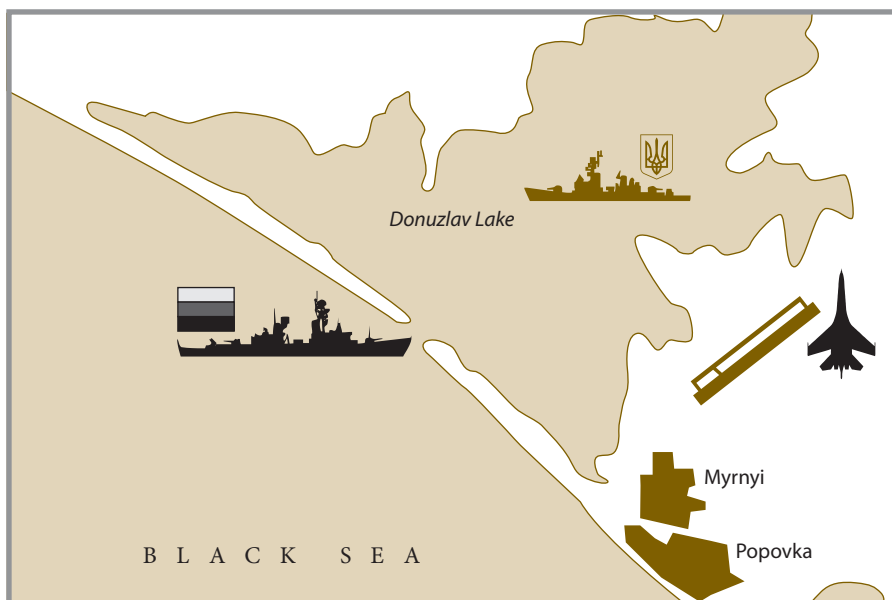
Throughout the Soviet era, the convenient harbor base of Sevastopol was the Soviet Black Sea Fleet's home port. In 1991, Crimea slipped out of Moscow's control along with newly independent Ukraine. Russia, however, considering itself the inheritor of the USSR, could not abandon the Black Sea Fleet as leverage against the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean Sea.

The 6th fleet was divided between two countries, along with its bases and equipment. This process of division lasted up until 1997, amid many diplomatic disputes. According to the initial plan, the Russian part of the Black Sea Fleet was to be re-deployed to Novorossiysk, Russia, but the supposed new base had yet to be completed and expanded. Until then, Crimean bases would have to be leased from the Ukrainians.

The first border conflict took place as early as 2003, almost a rehearsal of an invasion ten years later. Then, Russian leadership ordered construction of a dam stretching from the Taman Peninsula to the Ukrainian Tuzla Island on the border of the two countries. The contractors worked in three shifts, completing about 150 meters (492 feet) of earthwork per day.







Donuzlav Lake.
Ukrainian
Navy Base



After the dam reached a border pontoon near the island, a detachment of Ukrainian marines landed on Tuzla. A rocket artillery position was organized on the shore, a powerful line of ammunition was set up, and a minor war for a small island (approximately 3 square kilometers) was literally on the horizon. But politicians from the two countries reached an agreement, and the Russians retreated, at least for a while.

In 2005, there was a second rehearsal of future events. Russian marines landed on the Kerch Peninsula without any prior consent from Ukrainian authorities. They made their way across the Black Sea from their home base of Temryuk, Russia, and landed, with weapons and vehicles, at Cape Opuk in Ukrainian Crimea. The Ukrainian command reacted promptly, deploying paratroopers from the 79th Airmobile Regiment and 25th Airmobile Brigade with the support of the Ukrainian Air Force. The paratroopers occupied key heights around Opuk, thus blocking the Russian forces' movement and forcing them to return to base.



Standard
battalion
designation in
NATO countries
(on maps and
charts)

In other words, when talking about Russian annexation of Crimea, it is important to understand that the confrontation in Crimea is not new. Pro-Russian propaganda was constantly disseminated among the local Crimean residents. Political spin doctors were fanning the flames in

A battalion is the main tactical unit of ground forces, airborne troops, and marines. A battalion may be a part of a regiment, brigade, or a separate unit. A battalion consists of several companies, usually three. A battalion's manpower ranges from 100 to 800 people,

depending on the specific use of the unit. The battalion is the smallest unit with its own headquarters.

A battalion temporarily assembled from different units or units to accomplish a task is called a composite battalion.

pursuit of additional votes in both Russian and Ukrainian elections, highlighting «Russian-speaking» people.

And while throughout Ukraine people were stirred up by canvassing in the Ukrainian language, in Crimea, pro-Russian political forces were feverishly putting up billboards in the Russian language. This language difference naturally divided the people in their views...

Divide et impera

A special operation to annex the Crimean Peninsula began on February 20, 2014. Later, the Russian Federation issued a medal «for the return of Crimea.» As early as February 23, a massive rally of thousands of people was held in Sevastopol, which «approved» a resolution that no taxes should be paid to the central «Kyiv» government and that Russian citizen Oleg Chalyi was «elected» mayor of the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol. On February 25, a similar rally took place in Simferopol.

On the night of February 26, 2014, Russia entered the game. Men wearing Russian military uniforms without insignias, riding Russian military vehicles without license plates, suddenly appeared throughout the entire Crimean Peninsula. They took control of the Simferopol civilian airport, the Belbek military airfield, and the Kerch ferry terminal.

From the very beginning of the operation, Crimea was turned into an island, to which «little green men» (as the media called Russian military personnel without insignias) had direct access. Russian media immediately dubbed them «polite people.»

In order to understand the origins of the «polite people», we have to go back in time yet again. In 2009, the Russian Federation began to establish a Special Operations Forces (SOF), highly trained troops



79th Airborne Assault Brigade «Mykolaiv» (79 AABr)

Based in Mykolaiv.

In 1992, after the collapse of the USSR, the 40th Airborne Assault Brigade became part of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as the 40th Airmobile Brigade.

In 1999, the unit was transformed into the 79th Airmobile Regiment. Paratroopers of the 79th Regiment participated in UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, Iraq, Liberia, and former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro).

On July 1, 2007, an experimental 79th Airmobile Brigade was created by combining the 79 Airmobile Regiment with the 11th Army Aviation Regiment.

On March 2, 2014, part of the Brigade's 1st Battalion was put on alert and sent to Kherson Oblast, on the isthmus to the Crimean Peninsula. A plan was considered to move the unit to the north of the Crimea and gain a foothold there in several settlements. Major Dmitry Marchenko, one of the brigade's officers at that time, drove to Armyansk in a civilian car disguised as a taxi driver to assess the situation. As the main road in the city was already controlled by Russian troops, the plan was canceled.

On March 20, 2014, the 2nd Battalion was formed using mobilized manpower.

Since 2016, the airmobile brigade was reinforced by a tank company, after which the brigade was reformed and renamed as the 79th Airborne Assault Brigade.

purposed with achieving Russia's political and economic objectives at any geographical location around the world. Russian media sarcastically called them «troops fighting a war in times of peace.» Roughly speaking, the SOF distract a government from external problems by creating internal problems. Destabilizing the situation, stirring up public opinion and discord, provoking unrest or even rebellion, eliminating disagreeable persons under the vail of common robbery or kidnapping them under the masquerade of «terrorists» — these are all deliberately planned SOF functions.

Some missions can be accomplished through intermediaries by simply handing weapons over to organized crime groups or mobs of people dissatisfied with a particular state's politics. These groups can be found in almost any country, and once under the command and supervision of a highly trained leader and with external funding, they can become a powerful force to be reckoned with. The SOF also oversee the creation and training of guerillas.

The Russian SOF started working in Crimea in advance. Communication lines were destroyed and the majority of Ukrainian military commanders in Crimea were either bribed or turned into Russian moles. In short, they



25th Airborne Brigade «Dnipropetrovsk» (25 SABr)

Based in the Hvardiyske, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. The brigade is able to parachute at once with almost all with equipment. For this purpose, the brigade is armed with parachute-mounted armored vehicles: BMD-1, BMD-2, BTR-D, 2C9 «Nona.»

On May 5, 1993, the 25th Air Force Brigade was formed in Bolhrad, Odesa Oblast, on the basis of the 217th Guards Parachute Regiment.

On June 5, 1993, the personnel of the brigade took an oath of allegiance to the people of Ukraine, and the final formation of the unit

was completed on December 1 of the same year.

In 2002, the 25th Airborne Brigade was redeployed to Hvardiyske, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, and was given the name «Dnipropetrovsk.»

In 1993–2013, parts of the brigade became involved in UN peacekeeping missions.

As of early 2014, the brigade had only one fully operational battalion, the 1st Airborne Battalion, which had been regularly involved in training.

But even in that state, the brigade was one of the most combat-ready units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



Dmitry Marchenko is a Ukrainian military, an officer, participant in the Russian-Ukrainian war. In 2014, Marchenko was a Major in the 79th Brigade. Using his own car under the guise of a taxi driver, he led a reconnaissance mission in the area of Perehopsky

Val and Dzhankoy Airport. In October 2014, he participated in the battle for Donetsk airport. On December 4, 2014, he was awarded the Order of Bohdan Khmelnytskyi, 3rd degree.

In September 2015, he was appointed Chief of the Main Department for Development and Support of Logistics of the UAF. This agency is in charge of the transition of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to NATO standards in material and food procurement, development of new provisions, creation of technical documentation based on NATO standards, control over production and quality, and oversight over military procurement.

On May 3, 2019, he was promoted to Major General.

Ukrainian media described Marchenko as «one of the main reformers in the Armed Forces logistics sector.»

opened their garrison gates without any fight. Those who did not surrender stood in isolation from the outside world and did not receive any orders from their higher-up commanders.

Without an official declaration of war, the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) became prisoners of the situation. Hamstrung by the laws of peacetime, the Ukrainian military did not have the right to use weapons against aggressive pro-Russian demonstrators.

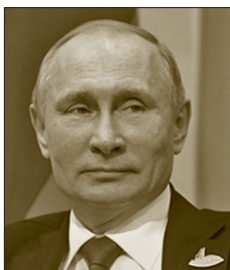
Russian Black Sea Fleet bases in Crimea started stockpiling fuel and ordnance as early as November 2013. For example, the amount of aviation fuel alone that was delivered in cisterns exceeded the usual resupply amount by 300 percent (45 cisterns instead of 12). Troops began covertly arriving in the early days of 2014. Given this fact alone, it should not be surprising that the Russian army was able to promptly block or take control of all Ukrainian bases in Crimea within a span of several days.

Why was there so much treason? What exactly prompted so many Ukrainian soldiers to betray their country, the people to whom they had sworn an oath of loyalty? The answer is quite simple. The Ukrainian army was virtually dismantled through the efforts of the country's pro-Russian leadership. Ukrainian servicemen were paid several times less than their Russian counterparts, who were their neighbors in Crimea. By 2014, a Ukrainian military serviceman's average monthly salary was slightly more than \$150. The Ministry of Defense's funding for troops was disorganized and military personnel suffered from inadequate supply of fuel and spare parts.

On March 1, 2014, President Vladimir Putin asked the Federation Council's permission to use the Russian military within the territory of Ukraine, and he was granted the «green light for his green men.» This was more of a diplomatic step and an act of intimidation, since Russian Special

The **Medal «For the Return of Crimea»** is an award of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, officially approved on March 21, 2014. This medal was awarded to military personnel of the Russian Armed Forces and civilians who took part in the operation to capture the Crimean Peninsula.

On the medal reverse, the dates 20.02.14–18.03.14 indicate the actual start of the operation. Important note: on February 20, 2014, former President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovych was still in Kyiv, and thus the Kremlin's statements that the Crimea «did not recognize» the new government in Ukraine are false.



Vladimir Putin is a Russian politician and former KGB officer. In 1999, he was appointed Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. After winning the 1999

presidential election, he held the post until 2008. Under Russian law, a person has the right to be president only for two consecutive terms; thus, from 2008 to 2012, Putin was Prime Minister, but remained the de facto leader of Russia. After winning the 2012 election, Putin became President for the third time. In 2018, he was re-elected for another term.