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ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE IN DONBASS AT THE BEGINNING OF ATO

The aim of the article is to study the armed forces of Ukraine in Donbass at the beginning of ATO. At the time of the start of the military-political conflict in Donbass, one of the acutest problems for Ukraine was the combat effectiveness of its armed forces. Separately there was a question of financing and supplying the army. The purpose of the article was to analyze the formation of regular troops in Ukraine in the first year of the antiterrorist operation and the infusion of volunteer battalions into their composition. The author reveals the actual aspects of reforming the armed forces of Ukraine in the context of military operations, analyzed the features of attracting volunteers as an alternative to regular troops. The system of calculation of salaries of servicemen and financial rewards for volunteers is considered. The author paid special attention to the analysis of the economic support provided by Ukrainian political parties and their leaders to the active forces, as well as the participation of servicemen in the political life of the state.

Keywords: armed forces, volunteer battalions, army, combat units, contract army.

At the beginning of the military-political conflict, the armed forces representing the interests of Ukraine in the ATO zone were quite diverse, resulting from weak internal coordination of all their actions aimed at resolving the conflict in Donbass. In fact, Ukraine, in conditions of conducting full-scale hostilities, tried to create a combat-capable army.

One of the topical issues of returning the combat capability of the Ukrainian Army was the problem, not patriotism, and the search for sources of elementary financing of military personnel. State military structures that defended the territorial integrity of Ukraine differed both in terms of salaries received by them, as well as in the provision of military ammunition, armaments and food. The main military structures were, of course, units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine subordinated to the Ministry of Defense and, in the vast majority, consisted of military, contract staff.

Since the beginning of the military conflict, Ukraine has restored what has been drastically destroyed for two decades. The figures are the most eloquent: in 2005th the number of the Armed Forces of Ukraine amounted to 245 thousand military personnel, and by the beginning of 2014th there were only 130 thousand people. In January 2016th, officials of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine reported an increase in the number of the army to 232 thousand, but forgot to take into account the fact that the increase in the number did not solve another strategic issue – the restoration of the quality of the armed forces and the formation of professional personnel potential of Ukrainian military¹. For a year, a large number of military citizens can be mobilized, they can be dressed in military uniforms and given them weapons, but to create a professional army it is necessary to have trained personnel, motivated not only by high wages!

In the context of the political conflict that began in the spring of 2014th, a debate emerged in society about the need to create an alternative to the SCU – a paramilitary structure able to revive the law enforcement agencies of the country and respond promptly to the challenges of national security. It was for this purpose that the decision was taken to revive, the system of internal troops – the National Guard, subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. So, in March 2014th, the National Guard began to actively form, but there was also a mistake – the professionals were declared enemies of the nation and applied lustration to them, and when the preference was given to «patriots» from Maidan, volunteers who did not always have a proper military experience, which in some cases was limited to street battles. This was one of the causes of defeats and illiterate actions in the first decades of the ATO, which did not allow the Ukrainian military to adequately respond to the actions of the regular forces of the country of the aggressor.

¹ 25 лет ВСУ: украинская армия в цифрах. <<http://www.anews.com/p/59625837/>> (2017, September, 15).

The situation began to change dramatically from the autumn of 2015th, as during this period the key principle of recruiting into the ranks of the National Guard of Ukraine was revised. The elite special units of the MIA «Omega», «Bars», and the well-known volunteer battalion «Donbass» and another volunteer battalion responsible for the defense of the city of Mariupol, a special regiment of the patrol service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs «Azov» also entered the first place. But even these units of professionals could not resist the army of Russian specialists.

In addition to personnel issues, the issue of number one for the Ukrainian Army remains to provide a decent funding of military personnel. In this aspect, the formation of recruits in the future was to become a contract and to choose a military profession. However, in the context of hostilities, the ruined industry of Donbass, a catastrophic collapse of the hryvnia, the state find it more difficult to find financial sources for a decent supply of troops without overloading the country's budget.

In 2015th, the Cabinet of Ministers significantly expanded funding for defense, providing an amount of 80 billion hryvnia. According to the Ministry of Defense figures, Ukraine witnessed a tendency to increase its defense budget. According to the data presented on the official site of the Ministry of Defense, in 2015th the financing of the Armed Forces of Ukraine amounted to 47.9 billion UAH, in 2016th – 55.9 billion UAH, in 2017th – 64.4 billion UAH. However, it should be understood that all these payments are possible only with the timely receipt and filling of the budget of the country, and in the conditions of the economic crisis, there are high risks of under-utilization to the profitable part of the state budget and, as a result, high probability of under-financing of the army¹.

It should be noted that in addition to the hopes for state funding, the mechanism of an alternative collection of money for the needs of the military is actively lobbied in the society, it is a voluntary donation of Ukrainians to the army. For example, within the framework of the campaign «Support the Ukrainian Army», 154 million 820 thousand UAH were donated to the Armed Forces of Ukraine from the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine as assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, of which, in 2015th – 1 million 538.8 thousand hryvnias². Within the framework of the mentioned action, one more urgent question arises: transparency of schemes of use of finances by state structures. Because, traditionally for the Ukrainian society, most of the sums disappear in «nowhere». As a result, servicemen who are in the zone of ATO do not get a lane, equipment, armament.

As regards the financial support of servicemen, it is necessary to state significant shifts towards the growth of wages. If in 2014th in the ATO zone they were negligible – ordinary staff within the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, including the units of the National Guard, received a salary of UAH 989. up to 1800 UAH, and officers up to 3000 UAH. Not much better looked at salaries in the ranks of the Armed Forces subordinate to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine: ordinary soldiers received from 1800 UAH, officers on average from 2800 UAH up to 3200 hryvnas.

From 2015th, there is a significant increase in wages for servicemen in the ATO zone. Finally, the system of equalization for the payment of military personnel who are subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine was eliminated. Since 2015th, the amount of payments has increased: ordinary contractors received payments from 5700 UAH to UAH 8445; Sergeant's contractors – from 6780 UAH up to UAH 12477; officer warehouse – from 9360 UAH up to 16710 UAH. From January 2016th all departments began gradually increasing the basic number of salaries to servicemen, and it was: for the ordinary and sergeant – 10447 UAH, senior officer – 21 925 UAH. And this is the basic number, it is already added an individual allowance for the work experience, as well as separately accrued a package of various rewards in the form of premiums for the destroyed enemy's military equipment, and so on³. For example, those who serve remotely from the first line of defense in safer areas receive less wages than servicemen who perform duties directly on the line of collision. For ordinary servicemen this ratio is 7000 UAH and 10300 UAH for officers, the order of numbers is higher, so the lieutenants earn 15,000 hryvnias in the active combat zone and 9500 hryvnias in the «rear».

¹ SIPRI: Расходы Украины на вооружение в 2016 году снизились на 3,8%. <<http://racurs.ua/86990-sipri-rashody-ukrainy-na-vooruzhenie-v-2016-godu-snizilis-na-3-8>> (2018, January, 15).

² Украинцы поддержали свою армию, перечислив 154 млн. 820 тыс. гривен. *Инвест Портал*. <<http://www.portal-investor.ru/economics/14992>> (2018, January, 10).

³ Минобороны удвоило выплаты военнослужащим в зоне АТО. <<https://b.marfeel.com/amp/inforesist.org/minoborony-udvoilo-vyplaty-voennosluzhashhim-v-zone-ato>> (2017, December, 12).

A new system of rewards has been developed, since February 3^d, 2015, a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «On the peculiarities of payment of remuneration to servicemen, persons of ordinary and commanding personnel during a special period and during anti-terrorist operations» began to operate, according to which a number of additional monetary rewards were foreseen for troops of ATO participants. Proceeding from this document, additional remuneration for personal involvement in armed clashes with an opponent in the amount of UAH 1,000, additional payment for the successful completion of the combat task paid to the unit, a separate military unit in the amount of 61 to 365 thousand UAH, for destruction a hostile vehicle provides a premium of 10 minimum wages (12 thousand UAH); tank – 40 minimum wages (48 thousand UAH); rocket launch vehicle 50 minimum wages (60 thousand UAH); combat aircraft – 100 minimum wages (121 thousand UAH)¹.

Amendments to the law of Ukraine «On the social and legal protection of servicemen and members of their families», according to which the time of military service of military service is credited to the length of their work in the specialty, as well as to the seniority of the civil service on preferential terms in the order in which one month of service on the advanced one will be enrolled as a three-year work in public authorities.

Increasing funding has become a central factor in the transition to a contract army. However, the quality and motives of citizens of Ukraine to serve in the ranks of the Armed Forces are far from purely patriotic.

The camps for the training of contractors of the Armed Forces remain in the archaic post-Soviet state. Of course, there are indications that meet all the requirements and norms, are brought in perfect order and brushed to the lice, but in reality, most of them have the appearance of tent cities, designed for the residence of 25 people, without any achievements of civilization and in the absence of domestic conditions: tight wooden beds, logs, eternal dampness, through the canvas, at best, the presence of bourgeoisie and the opportunity to take a shower, or to visit the bath once every two weeks. As a result, the small percentage of boys who really seek to serve solely on patriotic grounds lose motivation already at the stage of preparation, and most of the coming to the army is openly for wages, which by the standards of Ukraine are competitive and the main way of such fighters is to «settle» to serve in the ATO zone, but away from the line of collision.

Speaking about the moral spirit of the SCU, it is necessary to note the quality of selection and selection of contractors. According to the military personnel themselves, who were trained in camps, indeed, about 30 % are boys who already have experience in military service in Donbass and have been mobilized with the ATO, but have not found themselves in peaceful life, and decided to return to the habitual for them the profession About 10 % of them are military men who are seeking military occupation through patriotic considerations and the desire to bring the matter to victory, and 60% are, unfortunately, people who go to the army for material gain (wages and benefits provided) or to dodge from close contact with law enforcement agencies.

A separate page in the history of Ukraine's frontier advocates – volunteer battalions. Thus, on April 14th, 2014, Acting President of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchinov signed an order «On the beginning of the anti-terrorist operation (ATO) in eastern Ukraine». From that day on, the patriots are ready to support the combat capability of the Ukrainian army. However, in the absence of legal grounds for the conduct of volunteers in the conflict zone, none of the country's temporary leadership decided to take responsibility for giving orders to the army and voluntary formation. This is due to the birth of administrative chaos, one of the results of which was the emergence of military formations, called volunteer battalions.

In the spring of 2015th there was a re-subordination of volunteer battalions that were formally split by the spheres of influence between the National Guard, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. At the beginning of July 2015th, there were 30 volunteer battalions in Ukraine. The structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were as follows: Aidar (150 people), Shakhtarsk (250 people), Dnipro-1 (500 people), Kyiv-1 (460 people), Kyiv-2 (300 people), «Peacemaker» (500 people), «Artemivsk» (200 people), «Luhansk-1» (340 people), «Kievan Rus» (300 people), «Sich» (250 people), «Golden Gate» 200 people).

In the subordination of the National Guards passed: Azov (470 people), Donbass (500 people), UNSO (600 people), Dnipro-2 (200 people).

¹ В Минобороны рассказали о премиях: как доказать, что ты уничтожил танк. <<http://news.bigmir.net/ukraine/876020-V-Minoborony-rasskazali-o-premijah-kak-dokazat-chto-ty-unichtozhil-tank>> (2017, December, 20).

In the subordination of the military–political movement «The Right Sector,» under the leadership of D. Yarosh, were: «Volunteer Ukrainian Corps» (DUK PS) consisted of 16 battalions (the most famous ones – OUN, Carpathian Sich) and a specialized medical unit «Hospitalie».

The history of volunteer battalions originates from the very first days of the military-political conflict, during this period, the first volunteer battalion – Dnipro-1 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine – was created, followed by the operational battalion Donbass already in the structure of the National Guard of Ukraine, «Kyiv-1», and in May 2014th the list was replenished with battalions: «Azov» and «Aidar». These are the battalions, which today are rumored to be related to the activity of citizens as the image of all volunteer units. Although, in fact, they combine only one thing – the creation drive.

Frankly speaking, despite the battalion numbers, to date, most of them retain their status only on paper and are nominally. And this is largely the result of the «Iowa Boiler». In the confrontation with the terrorist groups under the town of Ilovajsk (Donetsk region), the main blow fell on the volunteer battalions that fell into the environs: Donbass, Kryvbass, Peacemaker, Ivano-Frankivsk, Volyn, Dnipro-1». As a result of being surrounded by most battalions survived a wave of desertion, as well as significant loss of personnel, which resulted in the actual cessation of part of the battalions.

Before deciding to enter all the volunteers in the regular armed and law enforcement structures of Ukraine, they existed de facto, but not de jure.

Let's consider some facts of the combat lives of these units, which can be conventionally grouped in the following groups. «Ideological», united in their circle proven Maidan and «hot» military fire of national patriots. In particular, it is the 5th and 9th separate «Right sector» battalions, despite the fact that they are operationally subordinated to the ATO headquarters, at the state level, these volunteers have been recognized as an informal military unit. Dmitry Yarosh, leader of the movement, does not hide the financial dependence of these military formations on «donations», the main part of which is the income from the diaspora of Ukrainians in the United States.

Also, ultra-right battalions include the «OUN» battalion created at the initiative of the Ukrainian Nationalistic Self-Defense Battalion. Representatives of the OUN battalion Butyl at ATO airfields (Saur-Mohyla district, Karlivka district, Sands, support of Ukrainian paratroopers at Donetsk airport). Only in March 2015th, this battalion received the official status of a separate unit within the Armed Forces. That's almost a year de jure did not exist, people with symbols, weapons were in the zone of ATO, fought, died, and under it they supposedly they were not there!

In addition to «ideological», there are other battalions, well-equipped, with official status. First, the battalions of the Dnipropetrovsk region, officially and unofficially funded by the former governor Igor Kolomoisky, speak of the first issue. The most famous among its armed volunteer groups is the Dnipro-1 battalion (500 people), created on April 14th, 2014, mainly from the residents of the Dnipropetrovsk region, in the structural hierarchy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. Before the selection of personnel in the battalion was approached carefully, there was a compulsory experience of service in the armed forces of Ukraine, the experience of military operations or work in law–enforcement agencies was covered. The most famous battalion commander was Yuri Bereza, who later became a deputy to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In September 2015th, by the order of the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Arsen Avakov, the volunteer battalion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs «Dnipro-1» was reformatted into the regiment, with the method of granting it broader powers to liberate the territories. There were many other examples of the «combat» past goodwill, and the fighters of the battalion managed to fight in the ATO zone and provide armed support at the bombing of the coalition SD «Krasnolimanskaya», and to control the preservation of «democratic elections» by blocking the work of certain district election commissions in Donetsk region.

At the same time, in addition to this battalion from Dnipropetrovsk region, such voluntary associations as «Sichslav» (from the Cossacks of the Cossack Regiment «Novokadatskasotnya of Zaporizhzhia troops»), «Artemivsk», «Kryvbass», all functioned under the leadership Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Dnipropetrovsk region.

Of course, the formation of volunteer battalions could not have happened without Yulia Tymoshenko. True, for obvious reasons, Yulia Volodymyrivna's finances was enough to support only two battalions and only as a PR campaign in the presidential campaign. Thus, in May 2015th in the Kirovograd region 34 Battalion (300 people) and the Resistance Movement (600 people) battalion, which position themselves as military formations of the territorial defense of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, but official

status, were created they never received it. After losing in the presidential election campaign, Y. Tymoshenko refused to financially support the mentioned formations in general.

One of the most mysterious and most «untwisted» battalions, thanks to its odious commander Semen Semenchenko, Donbass Battalion (500 people) combines two structures at once – the 24th Battalion of Territorial Defense Donbass, officially created on April 18th, 2014, a subordinate to the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and a Donbass battalion, which was controlled by the National Guard, already subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine.

Oleg Lyashko also drew attention to consolidating his positions and justifying the name of his «Radical Party», joining the financing of the most scandalous battalions: «Aidar», «Shakhtarsk», «Azov», which had a different territorial attachment.

In May 2014th, for the protection of the southern borders of Donetsk region of Mariupol, a voluntarily armed formation «Azov» (300 persons) was created under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. It should be noted that the composition of the battalion was very nationalistic, since it included activists of Avtomaydan, ultra-right movement «Patriot of Ukraine», ultras of the football team «Dynamo». The battalion commander Andriy Biletsky and his deputy Igor Moseychuk never hid their nationalistic views.

The fate of one more child O. Lyashko «Shakhtarsk» battalion was less successful. Created in June 2014th in Dnipropetrovsk region, under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the fighters «Hundreds of Jesus Christ» and «Brotherhood» Dmitry Korchynsky, formed on the Maidan, which could not fight for a long time. Already from October 16th, 2014, on orders of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine A. Avakov, the battalion was disbanded because of the reported facts of looting in the territory of the liberated Marinsky and controlled Ukraine in the Volnovakh regions.

Finally, the well-known and no less scandalous battalion «Aidar» (500 people). The 24th Battalion of Territorial Defense «Aidar» was created in May 2014th in Luhansk region on the basis of the military unit B 0624, was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

In addition to the facts of the heroic struggle of «Aidar» fighters with the invaders in the zone ATO, about these fighters is the glory of people engaged in raider and loot. In particular, representatives of the «Aidar» battalion took part in attempts to capture the Zaporizhzhya Aluminum Combine and the Zaporizhstal¹ Iron and Steel Works in Zaporozhye region.

The international organization Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases of abuse by members of the Aidar battalion in Novoiidsk district, Starobelska, Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Schastye in the period from July to August 2014th. The facts of torture, kidnapping of people from the purpose of extortion and theft of property².

With the beginning of the new Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine's membership in the battalions, there was another opportunity to «serve» the Motherland already in the legislative field. Deputies became participants of all influential battalions, with what in the composition of different political forces. For example, the People's Front party staked Mikhail Gavrilyuk, the commander of the battalion «Peacemaker» Andriy Teteruk, the commander of the Dnipro-1 Yuriy Bereza, the commander of the company of the battalion «Aidar» Igor Lapin, the hero of Maidan, the private battalion «Golden Gates». The pro-presidential party was much more modest by confining itself to the ordinary soldier of the Azov Battalion Oleg Petrenko. But many other direct combatants in Donbass entered the legislative body of Ukraine. If the inclusion of these persons in the electoral lists of political parties, of course, contributed to the increase of the electorate's votes to the leading players of the domestic political, then how to control such a contingent in the Verkhovna Rada, forcing the vote to take pro-government decisions that are in line with the interests of the «fellow» remaining in the fields battle – this question is open to today.

Thus, most of Ukraine's successes on the fronts of the ATO zone in 2014-2015th was the achievement, to a large extent, of the volunteer battalions, which, at the price of incredible efforts and courage, not only restrained the enemy, but tried to reverse the situation from the first days of the conflict.

¹ Айдар против Коломойского и Ахметова. За что воюют в Запорожье. *Лига*. <<http://biz.liga.net/all/industriya/stati/2885626-aydarvskolomoyskiy-i-akhmetov-za-chto-voyuyut-batalony-v-zaporozhe.htm?yakh.htm>> (2017, December, 09).

² Украина: произвол и военные преступления добровольческого батальона «Айдар» на севере Луганской области. *Международная организация амнистия*. <<https://amnesty.org.ru/sites/default/files/eur500402014ru.pdf>> (2017, December, 12).

So, for today, Mariupol remains Ukrainian exclusively thanks to the efforts of the Azov battalion (subversion and assault division of the 3rd Battalion of the National Guard of Ukraine), which holds positions in the Shirokino and categorically refused to comply with the order of demilitarization of this territory, realizing that this is only an opponent's maneuver. The railway and road bridges connecting the city of Mariupol with Ukraine and allowing it to be supplied are under the protection of the battalion «Dnepr-2», whose fighters took on these functions on their own initiative. It can be given too many similar examples of courage of volunteers, aimed at real struggle against the enemy.

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