

'Gods of War': How the US Weaponized Ukraine Against Russia

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Global Research, April 06, 2022

[The Grayzone](#) 1 April 2022

Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

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Since the US-engineered 2013-14 coup in Ukraine, American forces have taught Ukrainians, including neo-Nazi units, how to fight in urban and other civilian areas. Weaponizing Ukraine is part of Washington's quest for what the Pentagon calls "full spectrum dominance."

"[I]f you can learn all modalities of war, then you can be the god of war," so [said](#) a Ukrainian artillery commander in 2016 while receiving training from the US Army.

The unnamed commander was quoted by Lt. Claire Vanderberg, a mortar platoon leader training soldiers as part of the Pentagon's Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine. The training has taken place at the absurdly named International Peacekeeping and Security Center, which sits close to the border with Poland near the Ukrainian town of Yavoriv. Western media reported Russia's recent cruise missile attack on the base, but [chose not to mention](#) what has taken place inside.

The relationship described above is a snapshot of a decades-long US-NATO effort to not only pull Ukraine from Russia's orbit, but to actively weaponize the country against Moscow.

US national security state acknowledges "Russia is pushing back," not pushing first

In their internal documents, the Pentagon and other arms of the US national security state reiterate the same arguments the anti-war left does when it explains how Ukraine has been used to provoke Russia into a military escalation. The principal difference is that the Pentagon speaks from an unabashedly imperialist perspective in which such provocations are seen as an important component of US power projection.

Recently, the US Director of National Intelligence's Annual Threat Assessment [reported](#): "Russia is pushing back against Washington where it can—locally and globally—employing techniques up to and including the use of force." Note: Russia is "pushing back," not

pushing first.

A report from 2021 by the National Intelligence Council [concedes](#) of Russia and China: “Neither has felt secure in an international order designed for and dominated by democratic powers,” with “democratic” meaning the US and friends. Both Russia and China “have promoted a sovereignty-based international order that protects their absolute authority within their borders and geographic areas of influence.”

In October 2017, US Army Field Artillery School Assistant Commandant, Col. Heyward Hutson, who is responsible for training Ukrainians, [explained](#): “Ukraine wants to become a NATO nation, but Russia doesn’t want them to be a NATO nation. Russia wants to have a buffer zone.” He added that another “problem is a lot of Eastern Ukraine is pro-Russia so the civilian population there is divided.” A 2016 US Army War College report [reiterated](#): “Russia’s basic national security strategy is to keep its ‘neighboring belt stable’, NATO weak, China close, and the United States focused elsewhere.”

Another, from 2007, [explains](#) that the “pro-reform forces in power since the Orange Revolution” (read: pro-US forces) “would like to move Ukraine squarely into the Euro-Atlantic community with only limited deference to Russia.”

The document goes on to note that, at the time, the “Ukrainian political and military leadership has remained divided over the question of whether Ukraine should pursue a collective security approach or retain its neutral status.” It concluded that, while “[m]ost senior [Ukrainian] commanders have pro-reform credentials... there are still large numbers of senior leaders within the Main Defense Forces who have no or only limited exposure to Western training and operations.”

The US-sponsored coup of 2013-14 enabled Washington to smooth over that contradiction by launching an extensive program to train units of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.



President Bill Clinton signs NATO enlargement legislation, May 21, 1995

NATO is “not an exercise in diplomacy and deterrence as before”

When the Soviet Union collapsed, so too did its military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. But the West not only refused to disband its alliance—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—it expanded up to Russia’s borders.

NATO’s [own records](#) state that in 1992:

“Just four months after Ukraine’s declaration of independence” from the USSR, “NATO invited its representative to an extraordinary meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the body set up to shape cooperation between NATO and the states of the former Warsaw Pact.”

Russia did not propose a similar pact with America’s neighbors.

In 1994, Ukraine joined the so-called Partnership for Peace (PFP). Citing the UN Charter, the PFP [states](#) that signatories agree “to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, to respect existing borders and to settle disputes by peaceful means.” A US State Department primer [reveals](#) that the PFP had an ulterior motive. Its real aim was not neutrality but to move Ukraine and other signatories closer to NATO.

“Participation in PFP does not guarantee entry into NATO, but it is the best preparation for states interested in becoming NATO members.”

The primer also lists the 52 actual and planned military exercises in which PFP members initially engaged on or near Russia’s borders.

Bill Clinton-era policymakers [explained](#) that “NATO is not merely an exercise in preventive diplomacy and deterrence as before.” NATO expansion had a political agenda. They considered “NATO enlargement [a]s a democratization policy.” As above, “democratization” means pro-US. Citing President Clinton’s 1996 campaign speeches, the report notes that in their minds NATO “will provide the stability needed for greater economic development in Central and Eastern Europe.” In other words, post-USSR NATO was designed, in part, to guarantee US led-“free markets” (which are often neither free nor markets, but monopolies,) in ex-Soviet nations where state-ownership of businesses was the norm.

In 1997, NATO and Ukraine signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership. The Charter was a *prima facie* violation of the PFP in that it compromised Ukraine’s political independence. It proposed several areas of NATO-Ukraine cooperation, “including civil emergency planning, military training and environmental security.” NATO [brags](#): “cooperation between NATO and Ukraine quickly developed” in the form of “retraining for former military officers ... and invit[ing] Ukraine to participate in NATO-led exercises.”

Making Ukraine a “military partner of the US”

The US Army [says](#): “Ukraine has been a military partner of the U.S. dating back to the mid 1990s.” In 1998, America’s Special Operations Command Europe hosted a Special Operations Forces (SOF) conference in Stuttgart, Germany. The US Army [reports](#): “This benchmark even brought military personnel from Moldova, Georgia, and the Ukraine together to view U.S. SOF demonstrations and discuss opportunities for future Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) and Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP) events.”

In June 2000, the US Marines [reported](#) that the Navy's amphibious warship, the USS *Trenton*, had sailed from the Aegean to the Black Sea and had docked in Odessa (Ukraine). The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) "got to experience some of Odessa's history first hand when they climbed the Prymorsky, or 'Maritime', Stairs." In addition to the pleasantries, "the focus for MEU personnel and USS Trenton crew [was] NATO's next exercise - Cooperative Partner 2000 (CP00) - of which Ukraine is the host nation."

In addition to Ukraine's participation in the US-led NATO training and exercises, Ukrainian soldiers fought in American-led wars. After 9/11, they participated in the occupation of Afghanistan via NATO's so-called International Security Assistance Force. Ukrainian troops also aided the US-British-occupation of Iraq. In 2008, the Army [lauded](#) their comrades: "More than 5,000 Ukrainian troops have served in Iraq during Ukraine's five years of service in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom."

After backing 2014 coup, US provides "lethal security assistance"

Established in 2014 during the US-backed coup, the Ukraine component of the US State Department and Pentagon's Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) provides tens of millions of dollars-worth of training and equipment to "develop the tactical, operational, and institutional training capacities of its Ministry of Defense and National Guard." The State Department [says](#): "The GSCF has also supported Ukrainian Special Operations Forces in developing tactical and institutional capabilities that are compatible with Western models."

[According](#) to one Pentagon-linked journal: "Arsen Avakov, the Minister of Internal Affairs from 2014 to 2021[, ...] enabled the expansion and later integration of paramilitary forces into the National Guard," including the nazi Azov Battalion.

From 2015, the Pentagon's European Command oversaw the Joint Multinational Task Force-Ukraine (JMTF-U), in which the US Army and National Guard trains the Ukrainian Armed Forces. In addition, officers were [trained](#) in the US through the International Military Education and Training program. The Congressional Research Service [reports](#) that, "[s]eparately, U.S. Special Operations Forces have trained and advised Ukrainian special forces." In addition, the US participates in the annual NATO Partnership for Peace exercise, [Rapid Trident](#).

In November 2015, [supposedly](#) at the request of the new pro-US regime, the Obama administration sent two AN/TPQ radar systems to Ukraine. "President Petro Poroshenko had the opportunity to review the equipment, and was briefed by U.S. military personnel on its capabilities."

The US Army later [revealed](#) that the radar system was not purely defensive. A team from US Army Europe, Fort Sill's Fires Center of Excellence (FCoE), and the Army Security Assistance Training Management Organization (SATMO) "conducted four weeks of operator training."

Since the initial delivery, "Ukraine received four additional Q-36 radars ... and training by U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command with support from the FCoE and USSATMO." The publication [quoted](#) one trainer as saying that "the U.S. team showed their brigade, battalion and platoon commanders how to tactically employ the radar system to support fire and maneuver efforts."

Since 2016, SATMO's [Doctrine Education Advisory Group](#) (DEAG) "has advised Ukrainian Security Forces at the operational level to revise doctrine, improve professional military education, enhance NATO interoperability and increase combat readiness." In January this year, DEAG brought the first load of [\\$200m-worth](#) of "lethal security assistance, including ammunition for the frontline defenders of Ukraine."

US and Canadian military officers meet uniformed members of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion during a November 2017 multinational training session in Ukraine.

Photos from a deleted page on Azov's website: <https://t.co/08C1FLQ6Ee>
[pic.twitter.com/5RAlif6OFF](https://t.co/08C1FLQ6Ee)

— Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) [March 20, 2022](#)

US trains Ukrainians to "blend into the local populace" waging warfare in civilian-heavy areas

One of the more immoral US actions in Ukraine has been the training of armed forces to fight in civilian areas, goading Russia to fight in densely-populated locations with the effect of scoring anti-Russia propaganda points when Russians kill Ukrainian civilians.

In 2015, the US Marines [implied](#) that American service personnel would travel to Ukraine to fight. "Unofficial travel (leave or liberty) to any country in Africa or the following European countries [including Ukraine and its neighbors] requires command O-6 level approval ... The countries are subject to change based on the Foreign Clearance Guide (FCG), Department of State (DOS), Combatant Command, and/or Intelligence threat notifications." This suggests preparation for "irregular" warfare.

An undated document published by the US Special Operations Center of Excellence (SOCE), apparently from around 2017, [states](#) that "the United States should learn from the Chechnya rebels' reaction" to Russia's invasion of Chechnya in the '90s. It explains that the "rebels" engaged in "decentralized operations," using social media to "blend into the local populace." Russia's enemies used "misinformation" to manipulate Russians into killing the rebels' enemies.

The SOCE paper goes on to note that the Army Special Operation Forces "are trained to thrive in these environments." The document explicitly advocates for the US to train irregular forces to provoke Russia: "The United States should form an interagency working group with the Department of State, members of the intelligence community and SOCOM," the Special Operations Command, which would "serv[e] as the DoD lead/representative." It suggests that such a working group "understand that SOCOM actions will need to be unconventional and irregular in order to compete with Russian modern warfare tactics."

By bolstering Ukraine's armed forces and goading Russia, US elites have openly used Ukrainian civilians as pawns. For many years, Ukrainian forces were trained in urban combat by US personnel: i.e., to fight Russians in densely-populated civilian areas. "Task Force Illini" is comprised of 150 soldiers from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team of the Illinois Army National Guard.

In September 2020, the US Army [reported](#) that Armed Forces Ukraine soldiers “honed their urban operations skills as Task Force Illini advisors lent their expertise at Combat Training Center in Yavoriv” – the Western Ukrainian de facto NATO base near Poland’s border.

You may have heard about the International Peacekeeping & Security Center in Ukraine since Russia struck it. Previously, US & Canada used it to host trainings of Ukrainian forces. Here's a trainee with two black US servicemembers geotagging himself in Zimbabwe & posting "14/88" pic.twitter.com/dzsNsKzZEC

— Alex Rubinstein (@RealAlexRubi) [March 16, 2022](#)

“Thunderbirds” train Ukrainian in full-scale vehicular combat

The Oklahoma-based “Thunderbirds” have gone through several incarnations over the last century. The army unit was originally known as the 45th Infantry Division and is now the 45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. By early-2017, the JMTG-U mission fell under the 7th Army Training Command and US Army Europe, which paired Thunderbirds from the 1st Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment with soldiers from the Ukrainian 28th Mechanized Brigade and 79th Airborne Brigade. Their goal was to prepare Ukrainians for full-on vehicular combat.

Putin claims that Ukraine is a pawn of NATO. US propaganda rejects the notion, attempting to prove it by publicly ruling out Ukraine’s membership in the Alliance. But in April 2017, the US Army [admitted](#) that under the JMTG-U, the Thunderbirds’ mission was “to train the Ukrainian army to NATO standards, develop their noncommissioned officer corps, and help them to establish a combat training center, so that in the future, they can continue to train themselves.” So, if the Ukrainian military is trained to NATO standards and is overseen by a US puppet president, it might as well be part of NATO, minus the US obligation to come to its defense.

The proposed center became the Yavoriv Combat Training Center. The US Army [reported](#) that in October 2017, “a new grenade range was opened. Maj. Montana Dugger said: “We’ve helped them build long-range maintenance plans so they’ll be able to use these facilities for the next 20, 30-plus years.”

Seemingly ignorant of the comical doublespeak, the US Army also [explained](#) that Ukrainian’s Combat Training Center “is being established at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center near Yavoriv.” Also ironic is that while the Thunderbirds train a military incorporating neo-Nazi units to fight Russians in Ukraine, its [pre-1930s insignia was a swastika](#), which its Oklahoma-based museum [describes](#) as “an Ancient American Indian symbol of good luck.”



From the 45th Infantry Division Museum, the unit's original pre-1930's swastika patch

CIA covert operations' goal: "kill Russians"

In addition to the overt but under- or non-reported events outlined above, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has run a covert, eight-year training program. Why the need for covert ops in the face of extensive *overt* projects? The CIA specializes in assassination, proxy warfare, psychological operations, and false flags. This suggests that their efforts include tactics prohibited by the Geneva Conventions.

Yahoo! News [reported](#) that in 2014, under a doctrine called "covert action funding," "a small, select group of veteran CIA paramilitaries made their first secret trips to the frontlines to meet with Ukrainian counterparts." The training was conducted by the CIA's Special Activities Center, which suggests that even if the officers were "ex-CIA" and Special Forces, they were given access to Langley at high-levels, making it a *de facto* official mission.

One operative is [quoted](#) as saying that the officers attempted to Talibanize the Ukrainian paramilitaries in the sense that the Afghan Taliban had no sophisticated hardware that was vulnerable to enemy blinding. Ergo, basic, non-tech warfare training was required. The report says that the trainers:

"taught their Ukrainian counterparts sniper techniques; how to operate U.S.-supplied Javelin anti-tank missiles and other equipment; how to evade digital tracking the Russians used to pinpoint the location of Ukrainian troops, which had left them vulnerable to attacks by artillery; how to use covert communications tools; and how to remain undetected in the war zone while also drawing out Russian and insurgent forces from their positions, among other skills, according to former officials."

In addition, one former senior source [said](#) (paraphrased by the reporter): “The agency needed to determine the ‘backbone’ of the Ukrainians ... The question was, ‘Are they going to get rolled, or are going to stand up and fight?’”

So who tends to have “backbone,” i.e., a ruthless and psychopathic fighting spirit? Fascists and ultra-nationalists. Indeed, it has been widely reported by even US corporate media that the Ukrainian Armed Forces and paramilitary units were infested with Nazis. Today, the same media refer to the Nazis as mere nationalists.

Beginning 2015, the CIA’s Ground Department arranged for Ukrainians to be trained in the US south. The operations continue to the present and have been expanded under the Biden administration. “The multiweek, U.S.-based CIA program has included training in firearms, camouflage techniques, land navigation, tactics like ‘cover and move,’ intelligence and other areas.” One senior officer is [quoted](#) as saying: “The United States is training an insurgency ... to kill Russians.”

In February this year, shortly before the Russian invasion, it was [reported](#) that the CIA had been “preparing Ukrainians to mount an insurgency against a Russian occupation.” Against an occupation? Or an insurgency to provoke an occupation?

In addition to the CIA, the US military has its own covert operations. Under the [Resistance Operating Concept](#) started in 2018, the Pentagon appears to have been training territorial defense units comprised of Ukrainian civilians. This seems to have led to the creation by Ukraine’s Special Operations Forces creating a National Resistance Center that teaches civilians guerrilla tactics.

Ukraine military build-up brings the world to the brink

After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, pro-Russian eastern protests erupted in Donetsk and Luhansk. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) [noted](#): “The government in Kyiv responded with military force and employed local militias to help push back the separatists.” The CRS added that the US leads Britain, Canada, and Lithuania in the Multinational Joint Commission on Defense Reform and Security Cooperation. The Pentagon’s European Command had a European Reassurance Initiative at the time, which is now called the European Deterrence Initiative. Under this program, dozens of Ukrainians were trained in Huntsville, Alabama, in RQ-11B, hand-launched Raven drone operations. Seventy-two drones were sent to Ukraine in 2016.

A January 2016 UK House of Commons Library research briefing [states](#): “Fighting between Ukrainian government forces and Russian-backed separatists has killed more than 9,000 people since April 2014 and injured more than 20,000.” The briefing goes on to note that after the UN Security Council-backed Minsk II agreement, which called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of frontline forces on both sides, the Ukrainian parliament granted special status and enhanced autonomy to parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

The Royal United Services Institute is a UK Ministry of Defense-linked think-tank. One of its reports concedes that Russia had a largely “defensive policy” when it came to Ukraine. It [says](#): “Russian officials have become alarmed by expanding and overlapping Western alliances from an enlarged NATO and EU, to AUKUS and the Coalition of Democracies promoted by both the US and the UK.”

Part of Russia's strategy has its roots in the US-led destruction of Libya in 2011, the report explains. The NATO bombing of Libya and overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi "underscored how strong Western alliances were able to bypass or manipulate the [UN Security Council] UNSC, essentially circumventing a forum where Russian interests could be protected."

Indeed, on February 27th, 2022, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2623, which [states](#): "the lack of unanimity of its permanent members at the 8979th meeting has prevented it from exercising its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security."

The absence of international diplomacy, the weakness of a domestic anti-war movement in the US, and the cheerleading for war by many leftists and liberals under the doctrine that Putin is an evil villain has pushed the world as close to terminal nuclear disaster as it has been since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; perhaps even closer. Many Russians have taken to the streets to clamor for a ceasefire. After looking the other way as their leaders spent the past 8 years weaponizing Ukraine against Russia, Western publics have yet to demand the same.

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Featured image: US Maj. John Alan Gavrilov (right) trains commanders of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion as part of a November 2017 foreign delegation (Source: The Grayzone)

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