

# Leaked Documents: British Spies Constructing Secret Terror Army in Ukraine

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*Documents obtained by The Grayzone reveal plans by a cell of British military-intelligence figures to organize and train a covert Ukrainian "partisan" army with explicit instructions to attack Russian targets in Crimea.*

On October 28th, a Ukrainian [drone attack](#) damaged the Russian Black Sea fleet's flagship vessel in the Crimean port of Sevastopol. Moscow immediately blamed Britain for assisting and orchestrating the strike, as well as blowing up the Nord Stream pipelines – the worst acts of industrial sabotage in recent memory.

The British Ministry of Defense issued a [blustery denial](#) in response, branding the accusations "false claims of an epic scale." Whoever was behind those specific attacks, suspicions of a British hidden hand in the destruction are not unfounded. *The Grayzone* has obtained [leaked documents](#) detailing British military-intelligence operatives inking an agreement with the Security Service of Ukraine's Odessa branch, to create and train a secret Ukrainian partisan terror army.

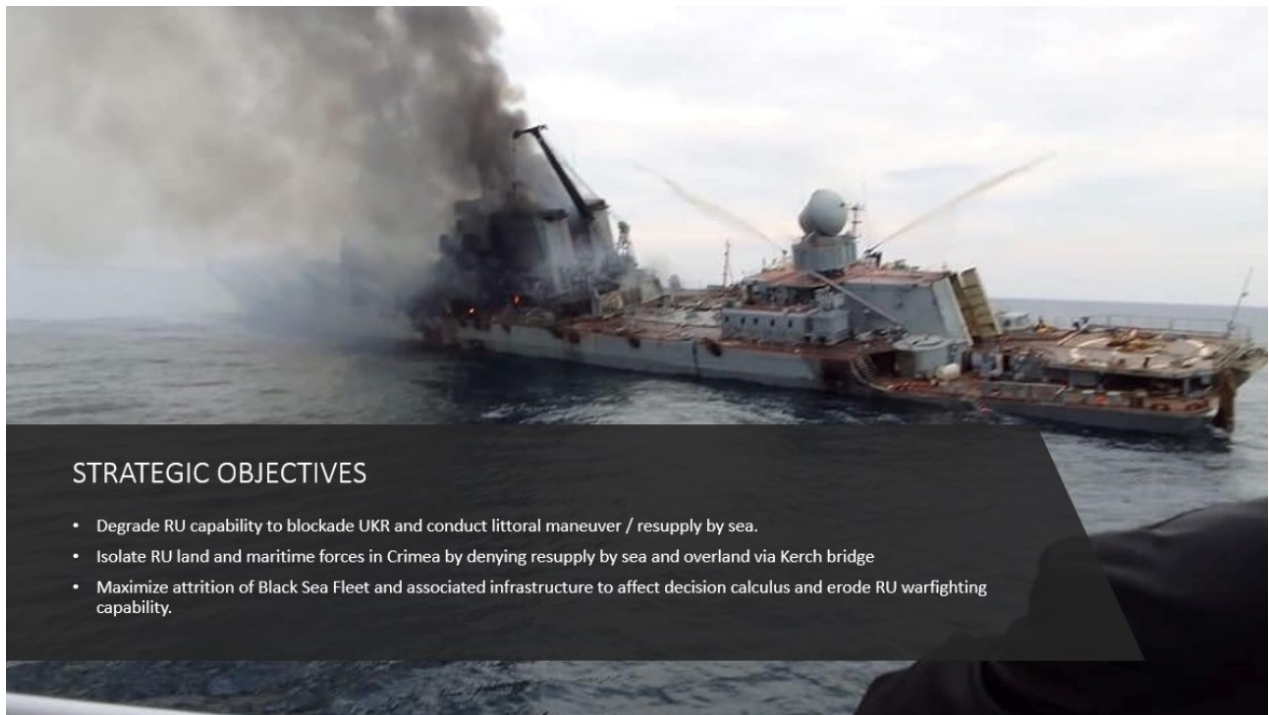
Their plans called for the secret army to conduct sabotage and reconnaissance operations targeting Crimea on behalf of the Ukrainian Security Service (SSU) – precisely the kind of attacks witnessed in past weeks.

As *The Grayzone* [previously reported](#), the same coterie of military-intelligence operatives was responsible for drawing up plans to blow up Crimea's Kerch Bridge. That goal was fulfilled on October 8th in the form of a suicide truck bomb attack, temporarily disabling the sole connecting point between mainland Russia and Crimea, and triggering a major escalation in Moscow's attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure.

These blueprints were produced by a military veteran named Hugh Ward, at the request of Chris Donnelly, a British military-intelligence operative best known for hatching the covert, Foreign Office-funded [Integrity Initiative](#) information warfare program.

The plans were circulated throughout Donnelly's private transnational network of military officials, lawmakers and intelligence officials. Such high-level connections underline that he is far from a passive observer in this conflict. He has used his position and contacts to secure the resources necessary to train up the secret saboteur battalion in order to attack Russian targets in Crimea. This wrecking strategy is certain to escalate the war, and undercut any momentum toward negotiation.

Branded "support for maritime raiding operations," the planned [assault](#) on Crimea aims to "degrade" Russia's ability to blockade Kiev, "erode" Moscow's "warfighting capability", and isolate Russian land and maritime forces in Crimea by "denying resupply by sea and overland via Kerch."



The documents obtained by *The Grayzone* show that these plans are conducted in close coordination with the Odessa-SSU, while a politically influential Ukrainian oligarch was tapped to fund the malign endeavor.

Since a Western-backed coup toppled Ukraine's elected government in 2014, Donnelly has worked tirelessly to foment proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. Private memos authored by Donnelly and obtained by *The Grayzone* this October reveal his lust for escalation has only intensified since the Russian military invaded Ukraine in February.

In a September 21st letter to his inner circle, Donnelly fretted that the Biden administration was not wholly committed to total war with Russia. Citing public statements by officials in Washington hoping for a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia, Donnelly declared (see below): "This US position must be challenged, firmly and at once."

In a separate communique, Donnelly blasted Biden as "so unwise as to beggar belief" for warning the Ukraine conflict could lead to "armageddon."

*“We want to see Ukraine be in a position where it is strong when it goes to the negotiating table with the Russians,” Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., told the US journal Foreign Policy last week.*

It is precisely this oft-repeated message<sup>1</sup> from the White House which has led Putin to believe that his tactics of threat and intimidation have worked, and that the West will ultimately force Zelensky to the negotiation table. This US position must be challenged, firmly and at once. Notwithstanding the crucial military support provided to Ukraine by the US and other Western countries, in the absence of very clear political messaging from the West, Putin is likely to continue to believe that he can control the information environment/policy debate to his advantage, thus prolonging the war and increasing the chances of a more dangerous outcome.

While *The Grayzone* cannot verify that the Ukrainian attacks on Crimea are the direct handiwork of Donnelly’s team, recent events closely mirror the strategies and tactics outlined in the documents this outlet has obtained. What’s more, the attacks have helped achieve the escalatory objectives pursued by both Donnelly and the British government, which successfully scuttled negotiations between Kiev and Moscow this April.

## **Ukrainian “partisans” trained to “shoot, move, communicate, survive”**

According to the documents reviewed by The Grayzone, a private UK military company named [Prevail Partners](#) has been contracted to recruit and train the secret Ukrainian partisan fighters. Prevail was founded by special forces veterans, including former Royal Marine Brigadier and Special Boat Service commander [Justin Hedges](#).



### **Founding Partner and Executive Chairman**

Justin retired from the Royal Marines and Specialist Military Units (SMU) in 2018 as one of the youngest Royal Marine Brigadiers ever. His unrivalled insights into the formulation of strategies and operational plans are drawn from command and control roles within the UK’s National Security Architecture. As Deputy Commander of UK SMUs, he demonstrated vision and ingenuity to generate a 10-year transformational programme of capability worth £1bn pa; developed inter-agency security strategies; and created crisis response plans for the PM in COBR. Justin was appointed as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for outstanding leadership on operations.

The company is headquartered not far from [RM Hamworthy](#), an elite British military training centre, replete with grounds resembling city streets and an “improvised explosive device lane” to trial combat scenarios.

The program’s genesis was the product of covert lobbying conducted over the course of several months by Donnelly, an MI6 veteran named Guy Spindler, and Audrius Butkevicius, a former Lithuanian Defense Minister with longstanding ties to the Ukrainian security, military and intelligence apparatus.

Prevail and TIW extend our greatest respect to your warrior spirit and deepest sympathies for the casualties and destruction caused by Russia's invasion. We hope that we may provide some hard won expertise to help defeat this evil enemy.

Prevail Partners Limited (**Prevail**) and Thomas in Winslow (**TIW**) have combined their expertise to support the government of Ukraine. PPL and TIW have presented our credentials and discussed urgent operational requirements with the Security Service of Ukraine Odesa Oblast (**SSU-Odesa**). This discussion has informed the attached introductory capability statement from Prevail.

We request the opportunity to present our credentials and discuss urgent operational requirements in Kyiv so that we can progress our proposed support.

*Slava Ukraini*

Several obstacles appeared as the Prevail team launched its effort to form the secret army. First, Ukrainian officials expressed reluctance to rustle up the sizable sums demanded by Donnelly's team, especially while Western states were pumping billions into the war effort. British officials were also skittish about farming out training services to private contractors, perhaps out of fear they would be caught in the act or even prosecuted for engaging in such provocative activity.

Re: Last night's call - my rough notes.

To : Guy Spindler

07/05/2022 13:02

At moment think Ukr are not reaching deeply into their pockets as so many offers from others, lend-lease etc. Query: will Uncle Sam pay for this?

Back here in London: J has had a number of good calls with MoD - they asked for proposals - costed proposal turned down for risk reasons. JH asked whether this 'applied to everything?' Emphatic reply: 'No - more to follow'.

JH plan on current requirement is to pre-cook a letter that Yuri then gets signed, then feed through to Embassy here. Their DA clear here he can action something if and only if directed.

So much money swilling around in private space. Just been talking to US drone seller who has sold two drones.

Within Donnelly's clique, concerns were also raised about Prevail's initial proposal. Alex Finnen, a member of the British Army's Specialist Group Military Intelligence spy cell and the

Foreign Office's shadowy Russia Unit, commented in a late March email that Prevail's offering was "very expensive for what it is," with a forecast cost of \$600,000 per partisan fighter per year – an indication the company was "in a sellers market."

"I suspect that they have taken the first figure they thought of and then doubled it. So, there needs to be more discussion as to how and what these people are going to do," Finnen cautioned. "Partisans live in and amongst the people. That suggests that you need people from across Ukraine, in small teams to take part as Prevail suggest 'oblast by oblast'. How are they going to achieve this?"

[REDACTED]

28/03/2022 14:03

Alex's private comments and questions

To : [REDACTED] <audrius.butkevichius@[REDACTED]>

This is very expensive for what it is; an average of US\$ 600,000 per man for a year. They are however in a sellers market, but I suspect that they have taken the first figure they thought of and then doubled it

So, there needs to be more discussion as to how and what these people are going to do.; viz: .

- question 1. How would such a package be delivered except in co-ordination with a sponsor within the Ukrainian system?

- question 2. If not, how are they going to identify the manpower required given that the men are all inside Ukraine?

- question 3. Partisans live in and amongst the people. That suggests that you need people from across Ukraine, in small teams to take part as Prevail suggest 'oblast by oblast'. How are they going to achieve this?

NB to get UK Government to finance it, If there is a Ukrainian sponsor then **those sponsors** are the people to reach out and apply to get government to government funding although this will I suspect take some time. It is one thing to give people weapons (defence sales) it is another to train combatants. of course it will be easier if the training can be done in Poland. then the trilateral UK-Pol-Ukr agreement could be the umbrella

After some maneuvering, a provisional agreement was drawn up on April 18th between Prevail and its implementing partner, a self-described "London-based crisis management company" named [Thomas in Winslow](#). According to the contract, Prevail would conduct a "capacity assessment" of the Odessa-SSU's operations, "then of other major regional SSUs and finally of the Security Services of all Ukraine," free-of-charge.



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## AGREEMENT FOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT BETWEEN PREVAIL PARTNERS, TIW, AND SECURITY SERVICE OF UKRAINE Of ODESA

This agreement is entered into between Prevail Partners Limited (Leading Partner), Thomas in Winslow Limited (TIW) (Junior Partner), both registered firms in the United Kingdom, and Security Service of Ukraine-Odesa Oblast, hereafter referred to as the SSU-Odesa. Prevail Partners and TIW agree to provide the following services to SSU-Odesa free of charge.

The primary purpose of this agreement is to provide the Ukrainian government an initial capacity assessment, first of SSU-Odesa, and then of other major regional SSUs and finally of the Security Services of all Ukraine. Prevail Partners and TIW shall use a detailed questionnaire to capture timely, relevant, and accurate information to assess the overall capacity of SSU-Odesa.

Although this round was on the house, the assessment would ultimately be leveraged to justify a major investment in the partisan program.

This objective was clearly emphasized in a Prevail appraisal of a battalion of the Ukrainian Army's 24th Brigade "being mobilised for deployment to the frontline." The memo was authored by Justin Hedges after a visit he paid to a military training base in the western city of Yavoriv, near the Polish border, in late May. Hedges was accompanied to the base by British military intelligence veteran Darren Liddle and two Ukrainian special forces operatives.

## Visit of Prevail to 24 Brigade of the Ukrainian Army 19 May 2022

**Context.** Prevail Partners Limited is a British private security company that specialises in providing training and advisory services. Prevail has had people in Ukraine since December 2021, centred on Odesa but across the country, and has built a very strong network of relationships. These relationships have been built upon: The breadth of demonstrated commercial expertise; successful security tasks during the early days of conflict from hard-to-reach places; valued military and intelligence advice; and demonstrable commitment to the cause at hand. As a result, Prevail was invited to visit the training of the latest Battalion of 24 Bde being mobilised for deployment to the frontline at the main Ukrainian Army base at Yavoriv.

**Purpose.** The purpose of the visit was to develop plans for training fresh battalions. The requests were made at a regional level and did not emanate from the General Staff at this time.

The invitation to attend “did not emanate” from the Ukrainian General Staff, but “at a regional level” – a reference to the Odessa-SSU. Over the course of 36 hours at the Yavoriv base, Hedges and company observed a portion of what he described as an “inadequate” 12-day training session given to conscripts aged between 20 – 58, none of whom had prior military experience, and who would eventually be sent to Popasna, “where the Russians are currently breaking through [Ukrainian] lines.”

Hedges noted a “very low number of instructors; no set syllabus and doctrine; no in-unit experience; no planning training” on the course, with “unsound tactics being taught by inexperienced foreign trainers,” leaving the battalion “not prepared for what they face.”

He appraised that many of those present “know that when they deploy to the frontline...it will be carnage,” particularly given the previous battalion to receive the same 12-day training “suffered 60 killed within the first 3 days.”

“[This leads] to arguably unsustainable casualty rates. In my view, unsustainable from a human capital and therefore political perspective over the long-term,” Hedges complained. “This problem cannot be left unaddressed any longer; the training gap must be closed now otherwise unsustainable casualty rates, owing to inadequacy of training, may become politically decisive by forcing Zelensky to concede ground to Putin.”

By contrast, he described Prevail instructors as “all qualified and experienced” with “combat experience,” and posited Yavoriv as “suitable and secure with appropriate discipline and tradecraft.” In other words, we can help, and you need us urgently.

As an email earlier that May from Spindler to Donnelly revealed, plans were already in the works to use the base to school 40-strong groups of partisans every four weeks over six months on how to “shoot, move, communicate, survive,” along with living in the woods, and “surviving.” Trainees “with aptitude” were to be identified and tutored in “specialist modules.”

Training programme asked for by Yuri. Two Prevail guys ex-Poole, sat down and focus on ‘4 weeks, shoot, move, communicate, survive’. Body of 40 people. From ‘this is a weapon - how to use’ - through to living in wood block, surviving. Proposal also for subsequently set up more specialist modules. People with aptitude can go into modular system. So: everyone gets the block, then split into specialist modular approach. All to UK standards for safety on ranges. Prevail team requirement for this: training (12 people) & admin (6-8 people) - need medic, storeman, comms person, chief inspector - to be done at main training area weary of Lviv which got hit by rockets early on. So 40 people running around with good people training them. For a year £14 million or so. [NB insurance per individual is £5k per fortnight so that's £2.5 million alone!].

As the plan developed, the training ground at Yavoriv was transferred to undisclosed sites in Greece and Poland.

Until now, the secret British partisan program has never been mentioned by the mainstream media. And as this report makes clear, significant efforts were undertaken by all actors involved to keep the initiative concealed from public view.

<b>Poland Training + In country rates</b>					
2 man team In Ukraine	Day	14	£	500.00	£ 7,000.00
In Greece	Day	12	£	350.00	£ 4,200.00
Flight Training Area	Week	0	£	15,500.00	£ -
Insurance	Per person	2	£	5,000.00	£ 10,000.00
Flights	Unit	4	£	2,000.00	£ 8,000.00
Subsistence Ukraine	Day	14	£	100.00	£ 1,400.00
Hire cars (3)	Day	7	£	100.00	£ 700.00
Subsistence Greece	Day	7	£	250.00	£ 1,750.00
<b>Totals</b>					<b>£ 33,050.00</b>

Hedges, the special forces veteran, considered government funding “essential to place this programme on a very firm footing.” He imagined that sponsorship could come from Britain, the US, Ukraine, “or even from the Baltics/Nordic countries.” If “separation of government funding from the activity” was necessary, finance could be “provided by flowing ‘donations’ through Prevail’s established NGO, Rhizome Insights Ltd,” a front that serves as the company’s “current route for funding equipment and training,” and therefore allows it to remain hidden from public view.

“This is how Prevail is receiving donations from NGOs/private individuals to fund equipment and low levels of other support at this time,” Hedges explained, noting that Prevail was also discussing financing with the office of Lviv Mayor [Andriy Sadovyi](#), one of the wealthiest oligarchs in Ukraine and the owner of the country’s Channel 24 news network.

## Donnelly takes aim at Biden for warning of nuclear “armageddon”

Chris Donnelly’s efforts at escalating the Russia-Ukraine conflict have not gone unnoticed by

British officials. As recently as October 8th this year, he was enthusiastically invited by Brigadier Julian Buczacki of the British Army's elite 1st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade to serve as key advisor to London's Chief of Defence Staff, [General Nick Carter](#), and [David Williams](#), London's principal civilian guide on defense matters.

In an email that afternoon, mere hours after the Kerch Bridge bombing, Buczacki noted he had recently been "deep in the maelstrom of crisis work" – and "on that subject," he had recommended that Donnelly serve as "counsel of the wise" to Carter and Williams on the grounds that they would benefit from an expert in "deterrence/escalation and all that."

"It would be pretty soon given context...I will shortly be stepping up to be ACDS [Assistant Chief of Defence Staff Military Strategy] (not yet public)," Buczacki concluded.

**From:** Sent: 08 October 2022 16:18

**To:** Chris Donnelly [REDACTED]

**Cc:** Julian Brig Buczacki <

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]Support to CDS

Hi Chris

It has been too long. I do hope you are in better health. I've been deep in the maelstrom of crisis work. On that subject, I offered to CDS that he and the Perm Sec would benefit from a counsel of the wise - deterrence / escalation and all that. He agreed. The first two names I'm chasing are you and Lawrie Freedman. Would you be happy / able to do that? It would be pretty soon given context. If travel is difficult, we could probably sort out VTC. I can't remember your clearances.

PS my work with Steve C has stood me in good stead. I will shortly be stepping up to be ACDS Military Strategy (not yet public).

Yours ever

Jules (Buczacki)

Donnelly promptly responded that he would be "delighted" to take up such a pivotal role in Britain's prosecution of the proxy war. "Short notice" was "no problem," he wrote, attaching his official British government security clearance, and two recent commentaries on the conflict in Ukraine he had circulated to his network.

The content of his commentaries makes clear Donnelly views the untold billions in weapons shipments flowing to Ukraine by Biden's decree as insufficient, and that he worries that Biden might soon appease Putin by authorizing negotiations.

President Joseph Biden generated [international headlines](#) when he commented during a fundraiser at the home of James Murdoch, the son of right-wing media mogul Rupert Murdoch, that Putin is "not joking when he talks about potential use of tactical nuclear weapons," and there was a very real prospect the conflict in Ukraine could "end up with Armageddon."

In his October 8th email exchange with Brigadier Julian Buczacki, Donnelly complained that the US president's "off-the-cuff remarks" were "so unwise as to beggar belief."

"I'm not sure what the opposite word to 'deterrence' is, but Biden is actively doing that, alas," Donnelly lamented. He argued that Putin's threats of nuclear warfare should be considered a bluff aimed at weakening the West's will to escalate until total victory is achieved.

Evidently, from his perspective, something had to be done to prevent Washington from authorizing a negotiated solution that would satisfy any of Russia's terms.

christopherndonnelly [REDACTED]

08/10/2022 18:34

FW: [EXTERNAL]Support to CDS

To: julian.buczacki [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

220921\_Ukraine Update & Comment.pdf  
796 KB

Ukraine Update 03 10 2022.pdf  
1 MB

CND CV Jun 2022.doc  
79 KB

Vetting SC 2018.pdf  
1 MB

Hi Jules

Great to hear from you. And congratulations on the new job! Well deserved.

Thank you for the suggestion. I'd be delighted. Short notice no problem. Lawry F is great. If you want ideas as to who else is trustworthy let me know

I am working from home in Cumbria with a broken ankle (fell on a fellside!!) but it's not a real obstacle to travel, just slows me down, and the orthopaedic boot should come off next Friday.

Att are my most recent commentaries. Only to add that Biden's off-the-cuff remarks at James Murdoch's cocktail party on Thursday are so unwise as to beggar belief. I'm not sure what the opposite word to "deterrence" is, but Biden is actively doing that, alas.

My DV expired ages ago. SC att, plus CV if needed.

## A 'human bomb' strikes Kerch Bridge

On May 25th, Guy Spindler emailed Donnelly to report that he had spoken "a couple of times" to Butkevičius, the former Lithuanian Defense Minister. He commented that Butkevičius had "done an excellent job of unpicking Ukrainian hesitation over training support, and has now caused Prevail's name to be fed" into the British government and its Embassy in Kiev – and therefore the Foreign Office and MI6 – "as a potential supplier."

Spindler judged Hedges to "be feeling positive," as British defense ministers were "reportedly no longer in principle against private sector training solutions." The only things left to do were secure official approval for some kind of guerilla-style operations, and "ensure that our contributions" – including those of Butkevičius – were "properly compensated."

Update

To: cdonnelly [REDACTED]

Cc: Christopher Wills [REDACTED]

I have spoken a couple of times to Audrius, who plans to be over early next week. He has done an excellent job of unpicking Ukrainian hesitation over training support, and has now caused Prevail's name to be fed into HMG/the Embassy as a potential supplier. Justin is also feeling positive, with MoD ministers reportedly no longer in principle against private sector training solutions. So the tricks will be to get all of this through; but also to ensure that our contributions (inc Audrius's) are properly compensated. Justin has agreed we need an agreement in place between us, and offered to send a draft - which I will chase.

Audrius also wants to discuss mine clearance, a major concern raised by the Ukr MoD. I have alerted HALO to the possibility we will have info for them on this.

I have very partial sight of Hugh's various plans, but please play me in as you will.

The MI6 journeyman added that he had "very partial sight" of Hugh Ward's "various plans" - a reference to "support for maritime raiding operations," inviting Donnelly to "play me in as you will." It seems the blueprint's assorted sabotage plots are so secretive and sensitive, even senior British intelligence officials charged with overseeing the operations aren't fully party to their details.

*The Grayzone* previously [exposed](#) Ward's blueprint for attacking the Kerch Bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian mainland. According to those plans, cruise missiles, specially trained scuba teams, or underwater drones would destroy the bridge's concrete pillars, as Ward saw them as the "weakest part" of the structure.

Though Ukraine's SBU security services ultimately opted for a truck bomb attack, a commemorative postage stamp issued by Kiev within [mere hours](#) of the bombing depicted two explosions at precisely the points suggested by Ward. The speed with which the stamp became available strongly implies it was prepared well in advance of the attack.

Prevail fleshed out plans for alternative strategies as well. A presentation produced by the company - entitled "Kerch Bridge information pack" - proposed blowing up a vessel carrying ammonium nitrate under a portion of the bridge overlaying a shipping lane.

Prevail's model for this attack was the August 2020 Beirut blast, in which a massive and mysteriously detonated explosion destroyed the Lebanese capital city's port, exacting significant damage throughout surrounding neighborhoods. The private military firm approvingly noted the 552 tons of ammonium nitrate that exploded in Beirut "produced a 140m wide crater and an earthquake of a 3.3 magnitude on a Richter scale," a quantity "much less than the 2,754 tonnes" that purportedly arrived in Crimea on a Russian-leased cargo ship in 2013.



It is unclear why the truck bombing scenario was ultimately chosen – perhaps because it provided a degree of plausible deniability to those behind the attack. Ukrainian officials, after [initially celebrating](#) the incident, are [now claiming](#) it was a Russian false flag operation.

Furthermore, in late August Russia beefed up [protective measures](#) in and around Crimea, such as moving an S-300 missile defense system to the peninsula, which may have necessitated an alternate course of action than the one originally chosen.

The bombing of the Kerch Bridge involved a vehicle packed with explosives and transported [from Odessa](#), Ukraine to Crimea, via Bulgaria, Georgia, and Armenia, using different drivers at separate stages of the journey. The last driver was allegedly unaware of their suicide mission.

If British agents had indeed orchestrated the attack on the Kerch Bridge, they likely drew on past operations that bore eerie similarities. [In 2006](#), an NGO known as British Irish Rights Watch published testimony by anonymous former British intelligence informants revealing that MI6 had spearheaded a false flag terror strategy known as the “human bomb” in Northern Ireland.

Civilians were strapped into explosive-packed vehicles, then coerced to drive into military checkpoints, inflicting incendiary attacks on targets that killed soldiers and civilians alike. The wave of bombing strikes inflamed local tensions, and provided justification for draconian British state repression of the province’s Catholic population.

“It is known that at least two security force agents were involved in these bombings and allegations have been made that *the human bomb strategy was the brainchild of British intelligence* [emphasis added],” British Irish Rights Watch stated in an [accompanying report](#).

Given the contents of the leaked material reviewed by *The Grayzone*, it is striking that the explosives used to target the Kerch Bridge originated in Odessa. Located just across the Black Sea from Crimea, this city hosted the SSU unit that served as the basis for Donnelly and Prevail’s secret terror army.

Russian officials have long stated that they consider Crimea to be Russian territory, and that any attack on it would cross a bright red line and elicit an escalatory response. When Donnelly and his team outlined plans to establish a secret Ukrainian “partisan” army, it seems this was precisely what they set out to do.

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*Kit Klarenberg is an investigative journalist exploring the role of intelligence services in shaping politics and perceptions.*

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