

UK special forces are supplying war zone training to Ukraine's troops

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British special forces are training Ukrainian troops in the war zone according to a report published in the *Times*.

The piece published Friday evening, headlined “British special forces ‘are training local troops in Ukraine’: Serving UK soldiers ‘on ground’ for first time”, states, “Officers from two [Ukrainian] battalions stationed in and around the capital said they had undergone military training, one last week and the other the week before.”

It reports, “Captain Yuriy Myronenko, whose battalion is stationed in Obolon on the northern outskirts of Kyiv, said that military trainers had come to instruct new and returning military recruits to use NLAWs, British-supplied anti-tank missiles that were delivered in February as the invasion was beginning.

“One Ukrainian special forces commander, who goes by the military nickname ‘Skiff’, said the 112th battalion, to which his unit was attached, had undergone training last week. The account was confirmed by his senior commander.”

The article claims, “British military trainers were first sent to Ukraine after the invasion of Crimea. They were withdrawn in February to avoid direct conflict with Russian forces and the possibility of Nato being drawn into the latest conflict.”

It continues, “Former British soldiers, marines and special forces commandos are also in Ukraine working as training contractors and volunteers, but the Ukrainian officers were adamant that their training this month was carried out by serving British soldiers.”

Much of the recent training provided by Britain to Ukraine has been in the use of the 3,600 Next Generation Light Anti-tank Weapons (NLAWs) that London has shipped into the war zone since February. These have played a crucial role in the Ukrainian military’s ability to destroy many Russian tanks and armoured vehicles.

The UK media have been jubilant for weeks over the role of British forces in Russian military setbacks. On

April 1, the *Times*, citing information from “Major William Ross, known as Bill, who ran army training in the country until February 13,” reported, “Ukrainian soldiers from across the country turned up in droves to receive UK training on anti-tank weapons in the days before the invasion, which then proved invaluable in slowing the Russian advance...”

The *Times* noted “the extent of the UK’s training effort in the country” by Ross and other British troops “who deployed to Ukraine in the months leading up to the invasion by Russia”. The “UK troops trained soldiers in counter-sniper techniques, how to defend against heavy artillery and how to fight in urban battles.”

The latest *Times* piece states in relation to the role of special forces, “The [UK] Ministry of Defence [MoD] refused to confirm the Ukrainian commanders’ accounts, citing a longstanding convention not to comment on special operations.”

All such statements from London refusing to confirm or deny must be treated as an evasion, given the long-standing record of British imperialism in anti-Russian intrigues, particularly in training and arming Ukraine since the 2014 Maidan Square coup. Britain backed the coup, led by fascist forces, including the Right Sector, Svoboda and the Azov Battalion, which overthrew the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich.

In February 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that Britain was to send military “advisors” and “nonlethal aid” to Ukraine, in order to “improve the survivability” of Ukrainian troops. As part of that operation 75 military trainers were sent to western Ukraine, “providing instruction in command procedures, tactical intelligence, battlefield first aid, logistics, and the planning and execution of urban operations.”

The British also assessed the future training requirements of Ukraine’s infantry.

A few months later, in July, Britain took part in a

multinational training operation, Rapid Trident. Led by the US and Ukraine, it brought “British soldiers together with troops from several other partner nations in the west of the country.” The MoD said “Partner nations” troops were trained in “essential tactics, such as reacting to contact with enemy forces. Battle Group Headquarters staff will also contribute to a command post exercise, testing the ability of commanders to lead operations alongside soldiers and officers from other nations.”

As part of the operation the UK Army sent in “Battle Group Headquarters staff and an infantry platoon from 1st Battalion The Rifles, a total of around 50 personnel, to provide vital training and contribute to the mission command headquarters.”

The same year, Britain codified its support role with the launch of Operation Orbital, its official training mission to Ukraine.

At the end of 2015, Cameron authorized an increase of £2 billion in the special forces budget, to be spread over five years.

In 2018, the scope of the Orbital training was enlarged with the deployment of “training teams from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines to deliver training to the Ukrainian Navy who face increasing threats in the Sea of Azov.”

In 2019, as the MoD revealed that 17,500 members of the Ukrainian armed forces had already been trained by Britain via Orbital, it announced a further extension “of its training mission to Ukraine by three years to March 2023.”

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace announced in September 2020 that Britain would lead a multinational Maritime Training Initiative for the Ukrainian Navy. The following year, in the lead up to the war and as Britain boasted that it had trained over 20,000 members of the armed forces of Ukraine, both nations played a crucial role in upscaling provocations against Russia as part of NATO’s UK-led Carrier Strike Group 21 operations in the Black Sea.

The WSWS reported in April 2021 that Britain’s Special Air Services (SAS) were by then playing a critical role in Ukraine: “The UK already has special forces and Royal Air Force (RAF) aircraft deployed to the region. An SAS special forces team and Royal Signals electronic unit were officially sent to Ukraine last week, alongside a US special operations team, to ‘monitor Russian activity’”.

As well as UK forces training Ukrainian troops in Ukraine, there has been regular training organised

between the two nations held in Britain. Last week, on April 12, the *i* news website reported, “Ukrainian troops will arrive on UK soil within days for emergency training in their fight against Russia.”

With the MoD’s assessment that there will be an intensification of the war in the east of Ukraine, the *i* reported Armed Forces Minister James Heappey telling LBC Radio that Britain was supplying Ukraine with 120 armoured vehicles that were being “made ready”. He added, “The Ukrainian troops that will operate them will arrive in the UK in the next few days to learn how to drive and command those vehicles.”

With Prime Minister Boris Johnson making a determined pivot to the US as a central plank of his post-Brexit strategy, and massively increasing London’s military capabilities, Britain can be relied on to stir the pot, no matter what the consequences. Last year Britain’s anti-Russian provocations in the Black Sea led to a Russian fighter plane dropping bombs in the path of a UK warship as tensions reached boiling point.

This weekend Russia acknowledged Britain’s role as the chief lackey of US imperialism in facilitating its long-held designs on the Eurasian land mass and the dismembering, ultimately, of Russia. On Saturday, Moscow banned Johnson from entering Russia, along with Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, Chancellor Rishi Sunak, former prime minister Theresa May, Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and other senior ministers and politicians.

Moscow’s Foreign Ministry said it was “in view of the unprecedented hostile action by the British government, in particular the imposition of sanctions against senior Russian officials.” Britain had waged an “unbridled information and political campaign aimed at isolating Russia internationally, creating conditions for restricting our country and strangling the domestic economy”.

Russia could just as easily have taken action against Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and his front bench, who have joined the ruling Conservatives in one de facto party of war. As Johnson rolled out initial sanctions against Russia, Starmer was bellicose in demanding he “ramp up” sanctions on Russia to “cripple its ability to function.”



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