

VISIT OF UKRAINIAN MILITARY OFFICERS TO UK 6 – 13 JULY

Introduction

1. Five Ukrainian Reserve military intelligence officers visited the UK between 6 – 13 July. Members of SGMI attended all of the presentations by the officers between 6 July and a.m. 12 July and accompanied them on all visits including social outings.
2. Although an interpreter was used all except one of the group spoke workable English and were aged between 45 – 53. Two had been Cols in the KGB, two were former Spetsnaz Bde Comds and the other was a communications specialist and almost certainly GRU in origin. All five were ethnic Russians with two of them originating from the Russian Republic.
3. The aim of this paper is to cover the major topics raised during the visit and this will be complemented by a series of appendices giving further detail of specific issues.

ATYPICAL ELEMENTS IN THE RUSSIA – UKRAINE CONFLICT

4. There are a number of elements within the conflict which have forced the Russians to adjust their TTPs and which may not be replicated were there to be conflicts elsewhere in the Russian near abroad e.g. the Caucasus or Baltic States;
 - a. The Russians have not to date employed their air force within the boundaries of Ukraine specifically:
 - (1) They have not deployed ground attack aircraft.
 - (2) They have not deployed attack helicopters or troop carriers.
 - b. There has to date been no maritime component.
 - c. While modern MRL systems such as BM-30 have been employed these launchers have been deployed only within the borders of Russia and this has limited their effective range.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

5. The Ukrainians stated that the IAW for both the initial attack in the Crimea and for subsequent in Eastern Ukraine were clear. In the case of the move on the Ukraine they claim that with hindsight they can observe that the contingency planning was taking place at least a year earlier. The key problem that they had on this occasion was that they were quote “betrayed” unquote by their own senior leadership. The long term, medium term and short term IAW are itemised in a separate appendix.
 - a. The ubiquitous nature of the Russian dominance of the electronic spectrum both for offensive and defensive operations. This includes both kinetic and non-kinetic activities and for example wide area jamming of GPS signals.
 - b. The ability of long range Russian precision fires coupled with precise targeting through either the use of UAVs or electronic emissions to destroy and degrade Ukrainian formations and in particular their Bde HQ and higher formns C3. The Ukrainians claimed that typical Russian response times varied between 2 – 4 minutes. This is covered in detail in an appendix.
 - c. The widespread use of UAVs of all natures from corps level legacy systems, down to cheaper US \$ 1,500 systems deployed at the tactical level. These systems were often deployed *en-masse* over threatened sectors of the Ukrainian front and the cheaper systems were often used as bait to provoke a Ukrainian response so as to enable artillery fires to be brought to bear. This is covered in an Annex as is the Ukrainina counter-UAV activity. This is

very heavily reliant on cannon based SHORAD with the most effective systems being the ZSU-23-4 and ZU-23 and an area where the UK is completely deficient.

d. The porous nature of the front lines and the relatively low troop densities particularly away from key ground and especially in rear areas was not appreciated by the 'West'. One of the officers had crossed the front lines on 63 separate occasions since 2014.

e. The porosity of the front lines and the intermingling of populations many of them opposed to Russian activities, even if of Russian ethnicity had enabled the Ukrainians to develop an effective *partisan* strategy. They referred to these partisan units as 'Operative Combat Groups' and on occasions they were grouped together into Coy sized formns for specific attacks on Russian regular forces, deep in the Russians rear areas. This is covered in detail in an appendix.

f. All of the key Ukrainian Comds and many of their men had served in the Soviet and Russian Armed forces and were ethnic Russians. They therefore understood in detail Russian operational art and tactics and the Russian mindset. As such at the tactical and operational level there were relatively few 'surprises'. What they were struggling with was the scale of the activity and the new technology with which they were faced and for some of which they had, currently at least no counter to.

Conclusions

6. A very useful series of first hand accounts of the rapidly evolving battlefield in Eastern Ukraine. Some areas were relatively well known while the porous nature of the battlefield and the use of the Operative Combat Groups were areas about which little had previously been discussed and would explain the Russians use of Bn sized BTR80/90 formns on counter-partisan ops as recently exercised in the Trans-Nistrian region of Moldova. The discussion and presence of a counter-UAV officer from a specialist counter-UAV unit was also illuminating as was the descriptions of the Ukrainians successes against the larger legacy system UAVs in Russian service.

7. The presenters made clear that Ukraine was preparing for a long war, a Ukrainian "hundred years war" as one of them put it. The discussion of equipment procurement programmes and the nature of the equipment being procured and developed by the Ukrainians, particularly in conjunction with the Croatians gave some insight into the way they saw their own military strategy developing and what for them is likely to be the best counter to Russian attacks. The Croatians have for example developed on behalf of the Ukrainians and put into production a man portable 60mm Mor with double the range of the UK weapon and this is designed for the Operative Combat Groups.