

CNN Shared a Glimpse of Just How Bad Everything Has Become for Ukraine

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The Ukrainian Armed Forces are in the midst of converging crises caused by the failed counteroffensive, the forcible conscription policy, and Zelensky's Kursk blunder, which are leading to more desertions, defeats, and ultimately more desperation.

CNN carried out a rare act of journalistic service with their detailed report about how "[Outgunned and outnumbered, Ukraine's military is struggling with low morale and desertion](#)". It candidly describes the numerous problems afflicting the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) at this pivotal moment in the conflict as they continue to [occupy part of Kursk](#) but are still losing ground in Donbass. Their story begins by introducing a battalion commander who lost most of the around 800 men under his control.

This figure couldn't take it anymore and thus transferred to a cushy military administrative job in Kiev. He and the five others who CNN spoke to when researching their report informed them that "desertion and insubordination are becoming a widespread problem, especially among newly recruited soldiers." In the words of one commander,

"Not all mobilized soldiers are leaving their positions, but the majority are...They either leave their positions, refuse to go into battle, or try to find a way to leave the army."

The reader is then informed that these troops are forcibly conscripted, thus adding context to why they desert, but they also claimed that morale problems began to infect the armed forces' ranks during the now-resolved impasse over more American aid to Ukraine. While that likely played a role, CNN conspicuously omits to mention last summer's [failed counteroffensive](#), which proved that Ukraine is unable to reconquer its lost lands despite all the hype and the aid that it received up until that point.

Moving along after having clarified the real reason behind the UAF's plunging morale over the past year, drones have made the battlefield more unbearable than before, and the amount of time between rotations has grown since some troops simply can't leave their positions without risking their lives. CNN then added that

"In just the first four months of 2024, prosecutors launched criminal proceedings against almost 19,000 soldiers who either abandoned their posts or deserted".

They also acknowledged that

"It's a staggering and - most likely - incomplete number. Several commanders told CNN that many officers would not report desertion and unauthorized absences, hoping instead to convince troops to return voluntarily, without facing punishment. This

approach became so common that Ukraine changed the law to decriminalize desertion and absence without leave, if committed for the first time.”

The impending Battle of Pokrovsk, which could be a [game-changer for Russia](#) on the Donbass front, risks turning into a total disaster for the UAF since “some commanders estimate there are 10 Russian soldiers to each Ukrainian.” Just as alarming is the claim from one officer that “There have even been cases of troops not disclosing the full battlefield picture to other units out of fear it would make them look bad.” Communication problems are also reportedly rife between Kiev’s varied units there too.

The Kursk front isn’t as bad, but it might not have served its political purpose of boosting morale among the UAF unlike what Zelensky has claimed. CNN quoted some sappers who were unsure of the strategy involved, questioning why they were redeployed from defending Pokrovsk to invade Russia when the Donbass front is experiencing such difficulties as was already reported. The piece then ends with a psychological support expert declaring that he’s no longer going to be emotionally attached to anyone.

Reflecting on CNN’s surprisingly critical report, it’s clear that the UAF is in the midst of converging crises caused by the failed counteroffensive, the forcible conscription policy, and Zelensky’s Kursk blunder, which are leading to more desertions, defeats, and ultimately more desperation. In such circumstances, Ukraine can either stay the course by remaining in Kursk at the expense of losing more ground in Donbass, withdraw from Kursk to help hold Donbass, or asymmetrically escalate.

The first two scenarios are self-explanatory while the last could concern expanding the conflict into other Russian regions, [Belarus](#), and/or [Moldova](#)’s breakaway [Transnistria](#) region, seriously damaging Russian nuclear power plants out of desperation to [provoke a nuclear response](#), and/or [assassinating top Russians](#). There are only a few months left before the winter impedes combat operations on both sides, after which the status quo will persist until spring, when one or both sides might go on the offensive.

This timeline adds urgency to the impending Battle of Pokrovsk, which Russia wants to win as soon as possible in order to push through the fields beyond, capture more territory, threaten the Kramatorsk-Slavyansk agglomeration from the south, and possibly prepare to make a move on Zaporozhye city from the northeast. If Ukraine can hold out into next year, then it could have more time to build more defenses beyond Pokrovsk, thus reducing the pace of Russia’s advance if it comes out on top there.

Even if Ukraine holds on for at least several months or perhaps as long as half a year longer there, the problems touched upon in CNN’s piece will likely only exacerbate seeing as how more forcibly conscripted troops will be thrown into what might by then become the next infamous meat grinder. Morale will probably continue plummeting while defections could spike, both of which could combine to cripple the UAF and create an opening for Russia to exploit in Pokrovsk or elsewhere along the front.

The ideal solution for Kiev would be to reach a ceasefire for facilitating its voluntary withdrawal from part of Donbass (ex: Pokrovsk’s surroundings) in parallel with pulling out of Kursk, which are terms that Russia might entertain since they’d advance some of its political and military goals. It’s better for Ukraine from the perspective of its regime’s interests to have an orderly withdrawal than a chaotic one if Russia achieves a breakthrough, but

Zelensky and his ilk aren't known for their rational decisions.

Nevertheless, those like [India](#) and [Hungary](#) who are want to help politically resolve this conflict could propose something of the sort, perhaps also suggesting the revival of last month's reported [Qatari-mediated partial ceasefire proposal](#) for eschewing attacks against the other's energy infrastructure. Zelensky is unlikely to agree, especially since he's under the influence of [uber-hawk Yermak](#), but it would still be best to informally circulate some variant of the aforementioned proposal sooner than later.

Regardless of well-intentioned third parties' proposals, the conflict appears poised to continue raging into the next year absent a complete military and/or political breakdown in Ukraine, neither of which can be ruled out though considering how bad everything has become per CNN's latest report. Ukraine and its Anglo-American "deep state" allies could also stage a major provocation aimed at desperately "escalating to de-escalate" on more of their terms, so observers shouldn't rule that scenario out either.

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Outgunned and Outnumbered, Ukraine's Military Is Struggling with Low Morale and Desertion

By Ivana Kottasová and Kostya Gak, CNN, September 8, 2024

As a battalion commander, Dima was in charge of around 800 men who fought in some of the fiercest, bloodiest battles of the war – most recently near [Pokrovsk, the strategic eastern town](#) that is now on the brink of falling to Russia.

But with most of his troops now dead or severely injured, Dima decided he'd had enough. He quit and took another job with the military – in an office in Kyiv.

Standing outside that office, chain smoking and drinking sweet coffee, he told CNN he just couldn't handle watching his men die anymore.

Two and half years of [Russia's grinding offensive](#) have decimated many Ukrainian units. Reinforcements are few and far between, leaving some soldiers exhausted and demoralized. The situation is particularly dire among infantry units near Pokrovsk and elsewhere on the eastern front line, where Ukraine is struggling to stop Russia's creeping advances.

CNN spoke to six commanders and officers who are or were until recently fighting or supervising units in the area. All six said desertion and insubordination are becoming a widespread problem, especially among newly recruited soldiers.

[Read the full article on CNN.](#)

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