

# Mercenaries Eager for Money But Do Not Want to Die for Ukraine

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*Two categories of foreign mercenaries are fighting in Ukraine – those who fight to earn some measly money and those who earn thousands of dollars a month by providing various services, ranging from training the Ukrainian army in combat to removing mines. However, what has become abundantly clear is that these mercenaries are not willing to die for Ukraine.*

US **Secretary of State Anthony Blinken** recently announced a new \$725 million military aid package for Kiev. During the administration of US **President Joe Biden**, a total of \$62 billion was allocated to the Eastern European country. The US military industry and US private military companies operating in Ukraine earn from this.

Several private military companies have been awarded contracts to support the Ukrainian armed forces in the war against Russia. Under contracts with the Pentagon and the State Department, American and Canadian military companies are engaged in protecting facilities in Ukraine, demining, reconnaissance, and training Ukrainian soldiers in artillery fire. They also maintain F-16 fighter jets and train crews.

Most of the funds allocated by the Biden administration were spent on the purchase of weapons and support for the US military-industrial complex, which is why they went to US companies that produce and supply weapons. In addition, large quantities of weapons were also provided from the existing Pentagon arsenals.

Private military companies' involvement in Ukraine is quite limited. Most of their services in other countries were primarily aimed at low-intensity conflicts, and their opponents were partisan or rebel formations in various countries. In such situations, private military companies could provide effective protection of communications, facilities, and property or participate in low-intensity battles against regular units.

However, the Ukrainian conflict is a war of large armies, an artillery war and a drone war. Private military companies, which are used to operating in low-intensity conditions, are not the best suited for the Ukraine War, which is why they have suffered heavy losses defending the Kiev regime. By the end of 2023, the peak of mercenaries in Ukraine had passed. Today, there are significantly fewer than before.

This has caused issues since, as consistent throughout history, mercenaries want to make money but do not want to die for others.

The Russian Ministry of Defence regularly publishes estimates of the number of mercenaries

and their losses in Ukraine. Moreover, the Ministry also provides data on the countries from which these mercenaries came. The largest number comes from Poland, then from the United States, and recently, many mercenaries have been arriving from Latin America, especially from economically less developed countries such as Colombia and Bolivia.

People come to Ukraine to earn money, but this conflict does not bring much income. Most of these mercenaries die in Ukraine or disappear without a trace. In many cases, their families never find their bodies. According to reports in March, almost 13,400 foreign mercenaries had arrived in the war-torn country to fight against the Russian army. By then, about 6,000 had been eliminated. According to the Russian military, most of the mercenaries came to Ukraine from Poland, the United States, Canada, and Georgia.

As for salaries, the Ukrainian government does not particularly enrich foreign mercenaries, so they are paid the same as regular soldiers and officers of the Ukrainian army. For many in Latin America, for example, a little money motivates them to be cannon fodder.

However, other mercenaries, such as highly qualified specialists, are hired to service complex Western equipment. These people receive significantly more money—at the level of first-class armies such as the armies of the European Union or the United States. These specialists do not go to the front or lie in the trenches but work on radars, air defence systems, aircraft systems, and other complex equipment that the US and the EU supply to the Ukrainian military. For such specialists, the salaries are much higher – perhaps several thousand dollars per month, and for some specialized jobs, such as air defence system operators or experts in long-range missiles such as ATACMS or Storm Shadow, salaries can reach tens of thousands per month.

Ukraine has adopted a law that allows foreign citizens to serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and hold officer and command positions, officially legalizing their participation in the army's structure. This confirms that cooperation with foreigners in the military continues and that they are attempting to fill the shortage of qualified personnel in the Ukrainian military.

Regarding the influence of private military companies on the conflict and the course of the special military operation, the greatest influence is exerted by highly qualified specialists working on the maintenance and use of Western weapons, which are now crucial in this conflict, as they enable the achievement of tactical and operational goals. Although the number of mercenaries participating in the fighting is not large, their role in maintaining and operating complex Western weapons systems has a major impact on the course of the conflict.

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