

Soldiers Abandon the Donbass Battlefield: Over 400 Ukrainian Troops Cross into Russia for Refuge

By [RT](#)

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More than 400 Ukrainian troops have been allowed to cross into Russia after requesting sanctuary. It's the largest, but not the first, case of desertion into Russia by Ukrainian soldiers involved in Kiev's military crackdown in the east of the country.

According to the Rostov Region's border guard spokesman Vasily Malaev, a total of 438 soldiers, including 164 Ukrainian border guards, have been allowed into Russia on Sunday night.

One of the Ukrainians was seriously injured on his arrival in Russia. He was taken to the hospital for surgery, the officials added.

The other Ukrainian soldiers have been housed in a tent camp deployed near the checkpoint via which they entered Russian territory. The Russian border guards are providing them with food and bedding.

Footage taken by the Russian media at the scene showed the Ukrainian soldiers being handed ration packs and resting in their temporary shelter. Those who agreed to speak on camera said they were relieved to be in safety for the first time in weeks.

Over 400 Ukrainian soldiers flee to Russia, ask for refuge
<http://t.co/b2v91q3FwI> @MKosareva

— RT (@RT_com) [August 4, 2014](#)

"We were given an order to leave our positions and go to Russia through a corridor. We were told it would be safe. Of course they, I would say, made us go fast from behind,"

one of the soldiers, a BMP driver who would not reveal his name or even show his face on camera, said.

"It was so bad back there. Hot, and so many deaths and bad things," another one, Dmitry, said.

"Folks can rest here. They gave us a chance to wash, gave us new clothes. We are thankful."

"We have been in those fields for more than six months and are very tired," he added.

Another one, Yaroslav, said he wishes to go back to his family in Ukraine. *“I want to do something peaceful. My contract expired four months ago,”* he explained.



Image: RIA Novosti/Yulia Nasulina

On Sunday, the Ukrainian anti-government militia reported that it was in negotiations with a large contingent of Ukrainian troops they encircled in Lugansk region on a possible surrender. The negotiations were being hampered by the troops' intention to destroy some 70 armored vehicles in their possession before laying down arms, which the militia wanted to capture intact.

The Gukovo border checkpoint, through which the Ukrainian troops crossed into the Russian territory, is located on Russia's border with the Lugansk Region of Ukraine, indicating that these are the same troops that were negotiating with the militia. If so, it was not immediately clear whether the vehicles they had were really destroyed.

[OSCE monitors and journos come under shelling from Ukraine at Russian border](#)

The flow of deserters from the ranks of Ukrainian Army and National Guard seems to be increasing amid the escalating violence in Donetsk and Lugansk Regions, where Kiev is fighting against armed anti-government militias.

In late July 41 Ukrainian troops [fled to Russia](#) to escape fighting in eastern Ukraine. They are now being prosecuted in Ukraine for deserting in the heat of battle.



Image: RIA Novosti

Several Ukrainian units have been reported to recently to be cut off from supply lines after attempted offensive operations, which brought them behind the militia-controlled territories and close to the Russian border.

The Ukrainian troops, while far superior to the militia in terms of heavy weapons, suffer from poor logistics. Many soldiers complain about lacking even basic supplies like food and water on the frontline. The situation is aggravated by cases of apparent negligence from the command, with units being supplied with faulty equipment, coming under [friendly fire](#) and simply left behind while retreating from militia counter-attacks.

A YouTube video allegedly shows a Ukrainian soldier explaining how he has to catch and cook snakes because his unit receives no rations.

[Kiev's National Guard unit mutiny: 'We've been discarded like trash'](#)

This causes serious morale problems in the army, with more critical voices saying the Ukraine de facto has no infantry troops and has no other way to fight but by leveling militia-held cities to the ground with artillery and air strikes.

There is a growing resistance to the military campaign among Ukrainian population, with several cases of mass protests against the latest mobilization drive, as mothers and wives of conscripts took to the streets to demand that their loved ones not be drafted into the army.

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