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THIRTEEN UKRAINIAN SOLDIERS DIED DURING TRUMP-ORDERED FREEZE ON MILITARY AID

BY DAVID BRENNAN ON 10/4/19 AT 5:03 AM EDT





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At least 13 Ukrainian soldiers were killed while President Donald Trump's administration was withholding military aid from the country from mid-July to mid-September.

The men, aged from 20 to 45, are among at least 78 Ukrainian soldiers killed in action up to mid-September this year in the east of the country, according to various local media and Ukrainian government reports.

It is impossible to say whether timely delivery of American aid would have helped any individual soldier. But their deaths are a potent reminder that while the Trump administration was wrangling over military assistance, Kiev was—and remains—locked in a deadly struggle with its Russian-backed separatist adversaries.

The administration's decision to delay almost \$400 million in military aid was communicated to the State and Defense departments on July 18, according to [*The Washington Post*](#). The Ukrainian government was not immediately made aware of the freeze.

U.S. shipments to Ukraine have included small arms, electronic warfare systems and a wide range of personnel gear and technology, including night-vision goggles.

Recent aid has also included anti-tank Javelin missiles, lauded as a symbol of Trump's commitment to helping Ukraine face down Russian and Russian-backed forces in the Donbass region. Congress earmarked at least at least \$50 million of the aid shipment for weaponry, [*Politico*](#) reported. The aid package was released on September 11.

While issue was playing out in Washington and Kiev, Ukrainian soldiers were still dying in the east. According to the [*Kyiv Post*](#), at least three soldiers were killed at the end of July.

Bohdan Bihus, 28, Oleksandr Bardalym, 33, and Roman Dzhereleiko, 31, were all killed by separatist forces on July 18 and 19. Bihus died in an explosion, while both Bardalym and Dzhereleiko were killed by snipers. The *Kyiv Post* reported that Bardalym was shot dead while trying to evacuate a wounded comrade.

Seven more men died in August: Oleksandr Sharko, 30, Vladyslav Rak, 20, Serhiy Shandra, 24, Vasyl Kurdov, 20, Roman Romanenko, 25, Vasyl Yevstyhneyev, 38, and Tykhon Kurbatov, 26.

Four of the men—Sharko, Rak, Shandra and Kurdov—were marines all killed together on the morning of August 6. The men were caught in an enemy artillery barrage while conducting engineering work on their positions.

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At least three more soldiers were killed before the aid was released on September 11. The Kyiv Post reported that one soldier was killed on September 2. The Unian news agency noted that another soldier was killed by enemy shelling on September 4 and another on September 5.

The war in Donbass has claimed more than 13,000 lives since fighting erupted in 2014. Another 30,000 people have been wounded. More than 3,300 of those killed were civilians, while more than 1.6 million people have been forced from their homes.

At least six civilians were killed and 22 injured in eastern Ukraine during July and August this year, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

A visitor stands at a wall at St. Michael's Monastery covered with photos of the Ukrainian soldiers killed in the war against Russian separatists in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine on October 3, 2019 in Kiev, Ukraine.

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