



ALEKSEI BOBROVNIKOV

The Ukrainian journalist Aleksei Bobrovnikov was born in 1979 in Kiev. He has published numerous short stories and essays in various publishing houses and weekly magazines in Ukraine. His latest book "The Edges of Georgia" was published in 2015 by the Ukrainian publishing company Kharkiv, which is an affiliated company of Bertelsmann Verlag. Furthermore, he worked as a scriptwriter on the documentary "Katyn: Letters from Paradise", which attracted a lot of attention in Poland and Ukraine.

The Donbas region has been an embattled area since 2014 and a meeting place for smugglers, money launderers and organized crime across national boundaries since Ukraine Soviet exit. In order to stop the shift of weapons, tobacco, fuel, gold, and other lucrative goods to Ukraine and Russia, Kiev installed a special troop. Since then, the head, as well as several members of this unit, have been killed.

As early as 2014, Bobrovnikov has reported on the Majdan protests in Kiev. Since 2015, he investigated smuggling routes in the contested Ukrainian region Donbas. In the course of this research, he identified involvement of the 92nd Brigade, a Ukrainian elite unit, in smuggling with Russian military and separatists. As a result, Bobrovnikov was threatened multiple times, even in front of the camera. Even the military publicly required his death. The officer Leonid M. posted on Facebook: "You have to die. Faster than you think." His main witness, a Ukrainian investigator, who had also been researching the smuggling, was murdered in an area controlled by the 92nd Brigade. The results of the research have never been evaluated by the Ukrainian military department of public prosecution in Kiev.

Aleksei Bobrovnikov worked for the TV station 1+1, which is owned by a well-known oligarch. His editorial office increased pressure on Bobrovnikov in order to prevent him from investigating. In June 2016, he was forced to quit his work at the TV station. For several months, he submerged in Western Ukraine. Even during this period, he was threatened. In September 2016, Bobrovnikov was informed, that the Ukrainian military service was planning to murder him. He then left Ukraine in a hurry. From January 2017 to February 2018 Aleksei Bobrovnikov was a scholarship holder of the Hamburg Foundation of Politically Persecuted. Currently, he is working on a book about smuggling in Eastern Ukraine. Since February 2018, Aleksei Bobrovnikov is a scholar of the Writers-in-Exile Program of the PEN-Center in Germany.

The dead speak slowly

The dead have a right to tell their story. To tell what happened to them in their last moments, but sometimes they are very slow to speak.

Two of my sources for information were killed, violently, secretly in the war-torn Donbass partially occupied by Russian forces and violent, lawless Russian-controlled paramilitary groups.

Though the direct warnings, harassment, mortal threats to my informants were not coming from the occupational Russian forces.

They were coming from their own fellow militants.

One of the murdered, a Ukrainian volunteer and a governmentally assigned investigator was reporting to me about the war crimes and money laundering.

Unfortunately for him and for me, he was reporting about the crimes among his own «brothers in arms».

The last conversation I've recorded with my source took place just two days before his violent assassination.

The second person who was killed in that series of events only became my source for information after his own death.

His friends and family asked me to look into his pre-mortal communication and check out for the probable suspects.

Why did they ask me?

I am not an investigator, neither am I a governmental official. I am just a reporter in the field, though they came to me when everyone else has turned them down.

The governmental officials, pretending to launch an investigation into these deaths, in fact, were hiding the evidence of a much larger scale. Crimes, murders, money-laundering on the governmentally controlled areas; the evidence, that proved a huge level of cooperation between the FSB controlled zones and the lands under the Ukrainian flag.

The dead have a right to be heard not only out the basic principle of justice or the security reasons for those, who are still alive.

The main reason why the dead need to have a voice is that without their voices we lose the grip of reality those people tried to preserve so strongly and so desperately in their last moments.

We lose the justice, the morale and, finally, we lose the state itself if only we won't let those silent voices speak.

The dead have a right to a free speech alongside with the living and they have a right to be heard, al-

though sometimes they speak very slowly and their voices have to be deciphered.

The voices of the dead this time spoke through their gadgets: tablets, PC's, smartphones, the erased files that someone wanted never to become public.

No governmental institution ever took part in this forensic expertise.

My group did.

I was able to dig into the files of the victims and some of the drafts of the investigations into other series of other deaths. The same or a very similar motive started to emerge amidst the cleaned-off evidence of the gadgets belonging to the murdered: dirty money, imitation of military action for fundraising among the patriotic groups, contraband, cooperation with the Russian occupational regime in Donbass.

«You're obsessed with your dead», – I was told back home – «go on and care for the living».

That's what I was constantly being told before I was fired from my job, publicly threatened and humiliated, and finally, warned by a few governmental officials

and military officers: the time for outspoken witnesses in that murder case is over.

The dead speak slowly but when they speak they speak facts.

That is why for the second year in exile I am still obsessed with «my dead» and still try to make their voices heard.

In times of war voices of the dead are always silenced.

As the voices of the dead are silenced, the death toll is getting more sound.

The hidden evidence is screaming through the new and new deleted files and messages of whose, who wanted to speak but to whom someone «strongly recommended» to remain silent.

The only thing I did then, and still do as a writer – I try to make these voices heard.

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Andrew Galuschenko's dossier

The murders in the police battalions and possible links to general military intelligence of Ukraine (GUR)

by *Aleksei Bobrovnikov*

Over a year and a half after the September 2, 2015 deaths of Andriy Galuschenko (my source for information on the «grey zone» and smuggling in war-torn Donbass), his fellow team member Dmytro Zharuk and his informal contact within the local military Volodymyr Kiyani in the Lugansk region I have heard many different theories about why they died.

Among the most ridiculous versions, some theories held that their deaths were an accident or even suicide.

The very idea of a professional soldier (in the case of Volodymyr «Typhoon» Kiyani of the 80th airmobile brigade) «throwing himself on a landmine because of the traumatic love affair» seemed weird to say the least. That theory was promoted by one of the intelligence officers from the Ukrainian 92nd Brigade who took part in Typhoon's last reconnaissance mission.

The area where all these deaths occurred was under the control of the 92nd Brigade.

I was in Lugansk oblast at the time conducting my own investigation into the «grey zone» with Galuschenko as my main source.

Shortly after the murder of my source of information I had an opportunity to record the words uttered by one of the officers of the 92nd Brigade.

His words stuck in my memory and became, in a certain sense, the starting point for further inquiry.

I remember these words:

«The smuggling won't stop. Everyone gets ground up in this meat grinder. Everyone. If you declare war on the smugglers... It won't come to a war. Quietly, this guy or that guy, we'll have to throw them out the window. What needs to be done needs to be done. To eliminate a person is no problem at all. I am saying this to you as a soldier. One shot and no one will hear. Now – a click from the bushes. And no one will hear the click of the rifle. A man falls. Where did it come from? From over there.»

In my previous publications, I have already discussed my own reasoning with regards to the potential guilty party in this case, as well as the circumstances that have forced me to leave the country to assure my own security.

It's notable that my work during the previous months was carried forward amidst total silence from the law enforcement authorities.



In the meantime, the 92 brigade commander colonel Victor “Wind” Nikolyuk (later promoted to major general – *editor’s note*) was spreading rumors that he himself has got plenty of compromising material on the chief military prosecutor Anatoliy Matios, who was in charge of the official investigation into the Galuschenko death; an investigation that was halted in September 2016.

My unofficial conversation with the speaker of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), Andriy Parubiy went in line with the colonel’s talk.

In may 2016 the Speaker of Parliament told me in a private conversation that the chief military prosecutor Mr. Matios and his people were deliberately hampering the investigation into that murder case.

At that time Mr. Parubiy and I have agreed to coordinate our efforts, deciding to organize a number of public events that would allow us to publicize some of the previously unpublished details of the investigation.

However, shortly after this conversation, the Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament dropped off the radar and has stopped answering my messages.

I received various data on the activities in the sector of the likely «overseer» from the GUR (General military intelligence), a certain person named Sirota; a police general of the police in the Luhansk region Anatoliy Naumenko, the deputy head of the civil-military administration, certain Yuri Klimenko, and also the smuggling activities of a number of officers in the 92nd Brigade.

All of them had a motive for murder.

In the meantime, I decided to restore, at least in part, the dossier compiled by my deceased source Andriy Galuschenko.

According to witnesses and the close associates of the murdered volunteer, Andriy Galuschenko handed over the dossier of investigative findings to the Luhansk governor’s team a few weeks before his death. It has vanished without a trace.

Andriy’s research included, according to several sources, information on abuses of the public funds at the front line, complaints from soldiers on financial irregularities committed by the staff of the military regiments, reports on smuggling activities conducted by the military operating in the sector.

My group has managed to restore at least a part of the materials gathered by the anti-corruption activist Andriy Galuschenko in the months before his death.

Galuschenko’s dossier

The main source of data for Galuschenko’s dossier was his personal computer, handed over to the 1+1 television channel, where I worked at the time by his friends and relatives, so that independent forensic expertise could be conducted.

The materials that we managed to find were immediately forwarded to the investigative authorities. That was in the spring of 2016.

At around this time I received my first suggestions from the managers of the media that I should “hold my horses” in this case.

Nonetheless, our group continued the work.

Some of the folders on Galuschenko’s computer were password-protected and some files has been deleted, so to gain access to them we had to use some special techniques.

Over the course of analyzing the material, it became clear that Galuschenko had taken a very meticulous

and scrupulous approach to his choice of sources' information and have gathered dossiers on wide-ranging groups operating both inside and outside «Sector A».

It also became obvious that Andriy had not used the computer on an everyday basis.

One of the most interesting pieces of anti-corruption research we have managed to find on his laptop were his documents on the activities of a group within the Kyiv-2 battalion, involved, according to Galuschenko's data, in a series of murders, thefts of weaponry and also the disguising the non-combat casualties or and possible murders as the combat losses.

This publication will refer to the documents found on the volunteer's computer up until July 2015, that is to say, two months prior to his Galushchenko's own murder.

The K2 case

The materials found on Anriy's laptop were handed over to the investigative authorities in 2016. However, as far as I know, the law enforcement officials has made no further inquiries since then.

Andriy Galuschenko's activity with these digital documents shows that he had been gathering this information for a long time, but was working on it sporadically.

Furthermore, there are no signs that Galuschenko returned to this work in July and August when the investigation of the shadow illegal trading with the occupied territories became his priority.



It was at that time, in the late August 2015, that he began to receive direct threats, including shooting at his group's vehicle in the immediate proximity of a command post of the 92nd Brigade, at the spot where even the hypothetical presence of the enemy scout group could be excluded.

It was at this same time that, in a conversation with his daughter, Galuschenko first boasted about his success in combating the illegal trade, saying that he was on the trail of "something very big."

The series of documents, gathered by Galuschenko a few months prior to these last, most dramatic days, represent his own drafts of the investigation into the illegal activities of the certain group of soldiers and officers in the Kyiv-2 police battalion, which was commanded at the time by Bohdan Yashunin-Voytsekhovsky.

I have handed the full version of these documents to a group of volunteers dealing with certification of the new police officers and the lustration in the ranks of the national police, which never was, in fact, carried out in full.

The only witness to this police battalion case openly named in my publication is Dmitry Tsvetkov. I am quoting him openly as Tsvetkov himself has previously made public statements on this subject.

According to Galuschenko's information, Tsvetkov has left Ukraine long before the publication of these files and several months prior to the murder of Andriy Galuschenko.

But let us get back to the original source.

The spelling and punctuation of the file have been preserved.

(The document is published unabridged in the original Ukrainian version in «Ukrainska Pravda» (13th March, 2017) This English translation is a broad excerpt from that publication)

File's name: Kyiv-2 episode.doc

Episode: Contraband

Date: September 2014 – March 2015 (information available until that date), Volnovakha district, Donetsk Oblast, checkpoint "Bugas"

Description:

Starting with passenger cars, every city to city bus was charged with a fee for crossing (of the demarcation line with the occupied territory – *editor's note*), taxed 500 hryvnas (per vehicle – *editor's note*). The tax was changing later on.

From October 2014 big large vehicle with carrying coal was charged 1000 hryvnas, a small one -- 500 hryvnas, then went the trucks, the tax was rising.

The situation remained unchanged until the total shutoff of the "Bugas" checkpoint for incoming vehicles at the beginning of 2015. After the shutoff

of the checkpoint, the tax for crossing had risen dramatically. The whole process was controlled personally by the battalion commander Voytsekhovskiy, Kryazh (Makhno), Zubkov (head of staff). Also, the deputy commander of the battalion Gerod (Grad), Docha, Bomba (Silenko) were involved.

Episode: Attack on the check-point
(part of the Tsvetkov's testimony)

Date: November 20, 2014, Mariupol–Donetsk road, checkpoint from Mariupol side

Description:

At around 19:00, 300 meters from check-point servicemen of the Kyiv-2 special police battalion detained the driver of a white Zhiguli VAZ 2106 vehicle (registration number AN5641ET), citizen V.N. Nazdrychkhin. He was taken to a duty station of the Kyiv-2 Battalion – a former traffic police post in the Volnovakha district of the Donetsk region known as ‘Bugas.’

Nazdrychkhin was subjected to a prolonged beating by Yaroslav Nikolaevich Kovalenko (call sign «Utes»), a member of the Kyiv-2 Battalion, who then handcuffed the driver to a tree and, a while later, moved him to a room in the command post, where he attached him to a battery.

As I found out, in the period between approximately 1:00 and 2:00 am, the battalion commander Bogdan Aleksandrovich Voytsekhovskiy (call sign Soty), beat citizen Nazdrychkhin in the command post, resulting in the detainee's death.

Then Voytsekhovskiy, together with Y. N. Kovalenko and Vyacheslav Yevgenevich Kryazh (call sign Makhno), loaded the body of the driver into a Nissan car and took it away from the check-point.

Later, at around 2:30 am, the aforementioned Zhiguli car was blown up on the order of the Kyiv-2 Battalion commander B.A. Voytsekhovskiy, as it turned out later, to stage a terrorist attack on the checkpoint.

(end of quote from Dmitriy Tsvetkov testimony – editor's note)

This framing-up was apparently organized in order to involve the deputy head of the Police HQ department on the organization of the activities of volunteer battalions Oleksandr Kuznetsov, who was carrying out an inspection mission and so was present at the check-point in person. He was on the spot at the moment when the victim was beaten and at the moment of the car blowing up.

The head of the department Chalovan Victor is aware of the situation and conceals it in various ways.

Witnesses – the duty watch of the battalion and half of the personnel present at the check-point “Bugas”.

(Duty schedule is attached)

Episode: Weaponry relocation

Date: 25-27 February 2015

Description:

(...) In the evening of 25-27 February, the Chinese truck, KAMAZ truck and Suzuki arrived from the direction of Donetsk to the check-point where they were met by Makhno. He ordered to let them pass without the routine check, himself got into the Nissan car, and then all of them moved in the direction of Volnovakha.

It's known for sure that the truck before its departure in the Donetsk direction contained some weaponry and ammunition, as it was loaded with it by the K2 soldiers acting upon orders given by Makhno.

Episode: Kostakov Sergiy
(scout of the 72nd Brigade)¹

Description:

In autumn 2014, at the time when Kostakov has disappeared in Volnovakha, people who were engaged in the search have contacted the militants from the K2 battalion. (...) They were told that Kostakov was detained on the train station or at the Military Governor's office by some people in the uniform.

After that he was handed over to two military officials arriving on a black off-road vehicle with the number plate “Kyiv 2” and then taken to an unknown destination.

In the “Kyiv 2” battalion a black Nissan with the number plates “Kyiv 2” was only used by Makhno (Kryazh).

At that time Makhno was in a close contact with the military commandant, he also maintains close ties with Mayboros -- the head of the local police department in Volnovakha, the chief of the criminal Investigation department Tsuganok and the prosecutor of that district.

Coincidentally at about this time Makhno took off the license plates with the words “Kyiv 2” from his Nissan car and drove his vehicle without the license plates until June.

Connections

Voytsekhovskiy. Freely communicates with Tereschuk², has privileges of being untouchable etc. While facing troubles contacts Tereschuk for support, Zviagilskiy (member of Parliament, «Party

¹ Kostakov was later found dead with multiple bullet wounds to his head (editor's note)

² Author probably means the head of the police HQ in Kyiv Oleksandr Tereschuk. (editor's note)

of Regions» – *editor's note*)³, Chalovan (police)⁴, Kuznetsov (police)⁵, Kosyuk (businessmen)⁶.

One of the K2 fighters Dmytro Tsvetkov was forced to leave Ukraine, as he publicized on the internet his testimonies on the internet and the reports concerning the unlawful activities of his commanders.

In the attached are the copies of reports, letters, collective letters, and other data. Not a single of these reports resulted in an adequate investigation. On the episode with a car blown up at the “Bugas” check-point no one of the sentries was questioned in six months after the incident.

Conclusion – everything is “silenced”.

End of quote.



V. N. Nazdrychkin

The files speak

The file cited above was created on June 10, 2015. The metadata of this file indicates that Galuschenko worked on it for two days – June 10 and 11, 2015, and subsequently did not return to it.

The remaining documents on the K2 case found on Galuschenko's laptop are the facsimiles of various papers documenting the “bureaucratic football” inside the national police headquarters, whose officials did not want to take responsibility for investigating a series of crimes linked to the Kyiv-2 battalion and were constantly changing the jurisdiction of the case.

There are also copies of statements from a number of soldiers and video materials. In particular, a piece from regional television where the bombing of a car at the «Bugas» checkpoint in November 2014 is presented as an enemy terrorist act, which runs contrary to the testimony of the eyewitnesses. According to Galuschenko's findings, the terrorist act was staged to conceal details of a crime (namely the murder of a civilian Nazdrychkin), committed that same night.

«Conclusion – everything is “silenced” – with these words Andriy Galuschenko ends his text.

Ties to the GUR

In one of his statements posted online, Dmitry Tsvetkov, a junior police sergeant from the Kyiv-2 battalion, writes about the career of his former battalion commander Yashunin-Voytsekhovsky.

³ Yefim Zvyagilskiy, MP from the ex-president Yanukovich “Party of Regions”, coal tycoon. (*editor's note*)

⁴ Victor Chalovan – the head of the special forces department in the police HQ in Kiev. (*editor's note*)

⁵ Oleksander Kuznetsov the deputy head of the special forces department in the police HQ in Kiev. (*editor's note*)

⁶ Probably a reference to Yuriy Kosyuk, advisor to the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko. (*editor's note*)

According to the documents released by Tsvetkov, Yashunin-Voytsekhovsky had previously worked at military unit A0515.

His service record, published by Tsvetkov, shows that Yashunin, who later changed his family name to Voytsekhovsky, served in this unit in 2013-14.

This information was confirmed to me by another source who had previously served in the K2 battalion.

By curious coincidence, both incidents – the episode I've described in my publication from January 23, 2017, as well as the draft of the investigation written by Andriy Galuschenko himself in June 2015, concern people who were, one way or another, involved in the activities of military unit A0515, which is part of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GUR) of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

It is that same military unit that was involved in the very peculiar affair of weapons going missing as part of a scam in a very peculiar weaponry leakage from the military base of the 92 brigade.

As I have mentioned in the previous publications the official investigation of that case, according to the sources in the General prosecutors office, resulted in a skirmish between the prosecutors team and the people of this military unit.

In turn, in the document quoted above, Andriy Galuschenko discusses the alleged theft of weapons from the K2 Battalion, whose commander also used to be an official employee of the same military unit within the GUR.

Coal with gold

Our team was also able to partially restore other materials in Galuschenko's dossier, in particular, those concerning the gold and silver shipments circulating between the occupied part of the Lugansk region (so called “LPR”) and the Schastye power station under Ukrainian control.



Trading activities with gold and silver works were already disclosed in the previous article by «The Interpreter Mag» in December 2016.

The destination of the trains carrying coal in the Lugansk region, as well as the goods that were carried under the cover of the coal trade from the occupied territories, was the power plant located in Schastye.

In the period of time relevant to this story that power plant was guarded by a unit from the 92nd Brigade, as well as a small contingent of troops from the 80th Airmobile Brigade, that including Volodymyr “Typhoon” Kyian.

Kyian died the day after Galuschenko's death after publicly announcing his decision to conduct his own inquiry into volunteer's assassination.

Beside the trains circulating in the region, the shadow trade in the sector was actively conducted using on the Lobachevo crossing over the Seversky Donets river.

Much of the direct and indirect evidence, recovered subsequently, leaves me with no doubt of the existence of a large shadow conglomerate, involved not only in the trading of goods including precious metals between the occupied zones and the main territory of Ukraine but also in a series of murders associated with this activity. Part of this conglomerate is a group of people from a unit of the 92nd Brigade.

Though, as I have written before, the architecture of this murder plot, the number of people with a motive to kill Andriy Galuschenko, and the incredible complexity of the links and contacts between the Lugansk smugglers make the investigation enormously difficult.

As a result, besides the direct involvement of the military, I cannot exclude the participation of members of any other Ukrainian security structure, acting in accord with with the servicemen from the 92 brigade, who at that time controlled all approaches to the place where the murders were carried out.

In addition to the death of Galuschenko (the only murder that had sufficient resonance and was at least partially investigated by the authorities), many other deaths require even a more broad inquiry.

The investigation into the Galuschenko case was officially suspended in September 2016, and the prosecutor's office has not named any of the potential organizers of this crime.

To be continued.

