

# The HONEYTRAP RESISTANCE

**A**T FIRST glance, Andrii is a typical university student. Aged 21, he has a mop of fair hair, blue eyes and a gentle smile. Unlike most students, however, he has been risking torture and death behind enemy lines, smuggling out secret intelligence to the Ukrainian resistance.

Andrii was born and brought up in Mariupol, the port city that was besieged and then invaded by Russia in the first two months of the war in early 2022.

The brave Ukrainian soldiers who remained in the city's steelworks for weeks under terrifying bombardment came to embody the nation's defiance against overwhelming firepower.

A true patriot, Andrii couldn't sit by while his country collapsed. So, unarmed and with just a smartphone, he began photographing documents, buildings and locations that he felt would be useful for the Ukrainian armed forces.

From August 2022 he became aware of a secure social media channel on which he could send his information to the Ukrainian army, barely 100 miles away with rocket launchers trained on his home city.

He then began locating and photographing enemy barracks and troop movements, along with weapon and ammunition stores.

This vital information was used to kill Russian troops and wipe out enemy equipment using missiles, drones and artillery shells.

Andrii is just one of tens of thousands of brave men and women who have risked their lives in what many abroad call the 'Occupied Territories' – but which Ukrainians prefer to call the 'Temporary Occupied Territories'.

About 20 per cent of Ukraine's land, mostly in the far east of the country, is under Russian control.

Millions of people are forced to live under the iron rule of their occupiers, who keep order through the threat of imprisonment, torture and even execution.

Aged 19 at the time of the invasion and living with his family, Andrii says: 'I wanted to do something, however small, to help the country I love. I did not consider my life was important compared to the bigger picture – I was prepared to die.'

After what felt like an age, he crossed the Russian border into Belarus, and from there to Kyiv.

He was sad to leave his family but relieved to leave behind a city starved of electricity and drinking water, with little food in the shops and few medical supplies.

'Life under Russian control was horrible,' he says. 'There was an information vacuum. The internet was blocked along with Ukrainian and US TV and radio channels.'

'We were cut off from the outside world and all we heard was Russian propaganda.'

Today he still works with the resistance but as an administrator in the Dnipro area in the east of the country.

He marshals spies still in Mariupol, feeding their vital intelligence to the armed forces.

'I am still trying to do my bit,' said Andrii, who has also resumed his studies. 'At the time of the invasion I was a quiet home boy, but I am proud of what I have been able to do.'

Behind enemy lines, resistance takes many forms. Some take part in civil disobedience, a kind of non-violent protest against the occupiers.

Their actions, designed to boost morale, include secretly painting anti-Russian graffiti in public places and tying yellow ribbons – a resistance symbol – far and wide.

Others ensure that blue and yellow Ukrainian flags are regularly hoisted in public places overnight.

Open protests, however, are non-existent because those who took part in them in the early days were arrested and sometimes tortured and killed.

Under the cover of darkness, however, Ukrainians sabotage infrastructure including railways, communications and factories, and some will kill the enemy if the opportunity arises.

The direct action of those doozy fighters, armed with a secretly amassed arsenal of guns, car bombs and other explosives, has seen hundreds of Russians soldiers and collaborators shot or



## By Lord Ashcroft

**WHO HAS BEEN TO UKRAINE'S FRONTLINE SIX TIMES SINCE WAR BROKE OUT**

elled onwards through enemy territory by bus, praying each time it pulled over that no more gun-toting guards would board, asking for an 'Andrii'.

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**Women who lure Putin's soldiers to their deaths with promises of sex. Spies pinpointing bombing targets. Locals handing out poison cakes. There's nothing Ukrainians behind enemy lines won't do to defeat their Russian occupiers**

blown up. I have learned that women are also playing a key role in the resistance, including acting as honeytraps to lure Russian soldiers to their deaths.

However, many soldiers are so hungry that poisoned food – rather than the suggestion of sexual favours – is the preferred method of assassination.

In the north-east city of Izium, during the first days of the occupation, two Russian soldiers were killed and 28 hospitalised when locals gave them poisoned cakes – a grim irony given that the Kremlin is no stranger to poisoning its enemies.

However, the most valuable weapon that fighters have is intelligence: information that, shared on phones, enables the Ukrainian army to strike from hundreds of miles away.

It should not be forgotten that

and women fed the army crucial intelligence using 'burner phones' – devices that are destroyed after the message is sent so the source cannot be traced – which they had been given in the weeks before the invasion when Russian tanks were massing on the border.

more brutal than anyone expected. Torture centres exist openly in many high streets, intended to give a clear and chilling message that anyone discovered helping or even showing sympathy towards Ukraine will be treated viciously.

One source said: 'The Russians are using medieval torture techniques in a modern war – dismemberment and castration – along with more modern techniques including applying electric shocks to men's genitals – they are monsters.'

He added: 'No one expected the occupation to be so harsh.'

Under the yoke of Russian rule, local populations have to tolerate rigged elections, forced mobilisation, repression and intimidation. Those who refuse to apply for Russian passports are deprived of the best homes, healthcare and education for their children, yet

still thousands defiantly keep their Ukrainian nationality.

Russia tries to control the internet, communications and all TV and radio channels, having set up at least one station aimed solely at their new Ukrainian civilians.

The channel continually broadcasts sinister warnings about the repercussions for those who collaborate with 'the enemy'.

Intelligence sources in Kyiv have learned that, after the atrocities at Bucha in early 2022, when hundreds of dead bodies of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians were found strewn in the streets, the Kremlin told army and security services that evidence of their barbarity must never again be left for the world to see.

Today its brutality is as common as ever, just more discreet. One 33-year-old member of the partisan group Atesh (meaning

**The teen spy who risked his life to save his friends**

ARTEM Kariakin was only 16 when he started working for the resistance in the eastern city of Kadiivka, overrun by the Russians in the spring of 2014.

In a small city that's home to plenty of pro-Russians (from before and after the invasion), Artem could trust no one. So he operated alone, risking his life to spy for the Ukrainian army and intelligence services, using secret social media accounts to provide details of enemy troop movements and weapon depots.

As early as January 2015 he saved the lives of his friends in Ukrainian-controlled Debaltsevo by tipping them off about an imminent attack and giving them time to shelter before the sky began to rain Russian rockets.

Despite life under occupation being 'grey and empty', Artem told me he stayed 'because I could see how useful it would be to Ukraine if I continued to pass on intelligence'.

After seven years of resistance, and following the death of his parents within a year of each other, Artem left in December 2021.

'There was a danger I would have been recruited into the Russian army, so it was time to leave,' he said. His arrival in Kyiv proved incredibly useful as Russian tanks were gathering on the border. The intelligence he passed on to the Ukrainian army was used for many of the early missile strikes on Russian positions.

Three days after the invasion, and having never carried a gun before, he enrolled into the Ukrainian

'Fire' in Ukrainian) told me that she could have left Crimea several times but chose to stay to carry out her valuable work.

'We cannot simply watch from the sidelines as Russia commits terrible crimes on Ukraine: kills, tortures, rapes, destroys entire cities and brings its terrible "Russian world" to free people,' she said.

Intelligence from Atesh has proved invaluable, not least in inflicting heavy damage on Russia's Black Sea fleet. As a

champion of bravery, a collector of gallantry medals and the author of seven books on courage, I have no doubt that once this brutal war is over, more incredible stories of valour will emerge from the rubble.

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**DEFIANT:** Artem is now part of Ukraine's Special Forces

Territorial Defence Force. He has been fighting for Ukraine, including in the Army's Special Forces, ever since – and he is in contact with friends behind enemy lines who are still smuggling out vital information.

His message to the West is simple: 'We desperately need more weapons and more ammunition, as fast as possible, to fight our enemy.'

At 26, Artem is regarded as a traitor in Kadiivka – his parents' graves have been draped in Russian flags. However, he is defiant.

'My greatest desire is to liberate my home city from Russia,' says the soldier, who has been decorated three times for bravery.

'This is not a dream – it is my goal and this will happen. I want revenge against all those who betrayed Ukraine and those who have stolen a big part of my life.'