

Mike's Boys (FIRST EVER USA BASEBALL ONE SHOT RPF AU FIC on Ao3)

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by [JohnRamos80](#)

Summary

A bunch of Army boys deployed from their base in the small town of Cary, NC, together with those who have trained there in years past, joins Ukrainians in fighting the Russian invader in a war that is already changing the world as we know it. Made in solidarity with the Ukrainian baseball community and in celebration of the 31st Ukrainian Independence Day.

Notes

For ways to help Ukraine, click <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/donate-relief-to-ukraine/> for a list of organizations that help those affected by the current war.

Message to all the Ao3 fan writers, including Sports RPF

LONG LIVE THE FIGHTERS!!! - Paul Atredes, Dune (1984)

My dear baseball fans and fellow AoE writers:

John here from the Philippines. It is a pleasure to be presenting one of my USA Baseball one shots here on Ao3 - the FIRST ever Team USA Baseball RPF on this site.

This work, which I've already done on Tumblr, is one of many one shots made featured in my ongoing USA Baseball RPF fic on Tumblr. It has been months in the making since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine this year (2022) that it can now be featured here on this site. It is one heck of a military-themed AU fic and I'm now expanding that universe to include men's and women's hockey, aquatics and lacrosse, and soon, American football, basketball and soccer. The USA Hockey RPF, through, also discusses the huge impact of the current war on sports, ice hockey inclusive, and the effects on sports as a whole, as well as how it is affecting the NHL as well considering the numbers of Russians that have played for the league for many years since the 1990s. This series is the second chaptered RPF AU military themed fic, this time with a modern setting in the midst of the current war as the Armed Forces of Ukraine and its wartime auxiliaries, together with those overseas foreign fighters of the International Legion of Territorial Defense have been for six months now fighting against Russia and the Russian backed governments of the Donbass in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts of eastern Ukraine, the first one is set in the final months of the Second World War in 1945 during the Italian Campaign of the Allies against Nazi Germany and the Italian Social Republic and began to be made last year during the 2021 Summer Olympics, which saw the USA win silver in baseball - that team was the very national team I followed from start to finish online in the Philippines and whom I cheered on till the end. My Tumblr series also includes many of the international baseball teams and those international stars playing in the MLB, minors and independents, as well as the college baseball stars and youth baseball. And of course, the iconic Savannah Bananas.

When I was continuing to work for that RPF and my Russo-Ukrainian War fic series last June, I stumbled on a series of tweets [by Eastern European expert Sergej Sumlenny](#) regarding the current Russian war against Ukraine, which began last February just this year days following the closing ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics. It was regarding how Russian authors of time travel and alternate history novels known as *popadanets* in the 2000s and 2010s, with some films being of the same genre, helped Russia prepare for this war, and these writers have been making such stories to instill in Russia's youth a sense of national pride and determination towards self-fulfillment and patriotic nostalgia over the times of Soviet superpower or in the days of the Russian Empire and an ultimate goal of gearing them towards the struggle against the West and modernism. They have branched off into making anti-Western action novels depicting young men and women fighting against Western values, NATO, the European Union and the United States in the name of Russia, her people and the Russian Armed Forces. My work is just one fighting that Russian literary trend, this time in social media, integrating with the already existing practice of sports fanfiction here on AoE, Tumblr, Wattpad and FanFiction, among other sites, and also bringing awareness of this ongoing conflict to the fanfic communities online and what we can do to help Ukraine cope from the damage of that war and win victory against Russia at all fronts.

And more importantly, this is the FIRST EVER Team USA Baseball fic here, as previously mentioned. Almost every Major League Baseball team has been featured here, but there has been no national team fic from any of the national team programs and national federations in the vein of those featuring national hockey and soccer teams. Till now. A few USA Baseball national team

alumni have been featured on fics here, and my fic will feature a lot of the faces from the Professional (Olympics, WBC and WBSC Premier 12), Collegiate National and youth teams (18U and 16U), as well as the 16/17u National Team Development Program in the vein of those fics featuring the USA Hockey NTDP, especially those playing in Major League Baseball, the minors and independent leagues. And also it will feature Americans playing abroad in the international leagues in East Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the Australian Baseball League.

As the baseball fans in the USA gear up for the return next year of the World Baseball Classic and celebrate USA Baseball's 45th year anniversary since its foundation in 1978 as the national baseball federation of the USA, it is with great honor that in commemoration of these two events I present the very first USA Baseball one shot RPF here on this site, also in celebration of 31 years of Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union, in solidarity with the great Ukrainian people and its armed forces fighting Russia's armed forces in every corner of the land in this current war, and in memoriam of the countless Ukrainian military and civilian fallen of this current conflict and in the earlier Donbas War of 2014-22.

I present this to all of you the sports fic writers of the world this great work also dedicated to all of you as well, especially some of you who are already active in supporting the relief effort during the Ukrainian war against Russia, and I have done my best to present an authentic modern-day military and battle fic backed by my usual monitoring of the war online since its start and my ongoing research on modern warfare tactics and operations, especially the US, NATO and the former Warsaw Pact armed forces and those of the former Soviet Union, for this series of fics on Tumblr (as well as WW2 tactics and ops for my first RPF). I hope you read my other works on Tumblr as well.

May this effort and others help all of us be aware of the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine and make us ready to do our part to help those who have been hurt by this war in one way or another, honor the fallen, and join the march towards a better tomorrow not just for Ukraine but for humanity and the whole world.

Happy 31st Ukrainian Independence Day!

SLAVA UKRAINI!!! HEROYAM SLAVA!!!

GLORY TO THE NATION! AND DEATH TO HER ENEMIES!

For Glory

John Ramos

Makati City, Philippines

August 2022

PS: The US national women's baseball team, and of course their softball brothers and sisters who also appeared in the Olympics and the World Games as well as various international competitions, are also featured in this series.

Chapter 1 - Prologue

Chapter Notes

(AN: Dedicated to manager Mike Bianco and his boys of the 2022 USA Baseball CNT who won the hearts of the nation in their journey in the recently concluded Haarlem Baseball Week in the Netherlands. They together with those who took part in the team trials are featured in this one shot. It is also in honor of the 1st anniversary of Team USA's Olympics silver campaign in Japan led by skipper Mike Scioscia, the 31st Ukrainian Independence Day and Mark DeRosa's appointment as USA Baseball skipper for the World Baseball Classic as well as the recent staff announcements for Team USA for that event. It will be a preview of the many other faces featured in this Tumblr fic series from within the MLB and the other USA and Canadian leagues. Also, I'm using townships as American English equivalent for the hromadas or municipal governments under Ukrainian districts since they were in existence since 2020. This is the FIRST Team USA Baseball RPF on this site after years of the USA Hockey team RPFs featured there on Ao3 and this is dedicated to all the sports RPF writers here.)

For ways to help Ukraine, click <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/donate-relief-to-ukraine/> for a list of organizations that help those affected by the current war.

SOMEWHERE SOUTH OF THE KHARKIV METROPOLITAN AREA, KHARKIV OBLAST

Friday, April 29, 2022

1415H EEST

Given that the 78th Infantry Brigade Combat Team has excelled themselves in helping the Ukrainian counteroffensive that has relieved the ongoing near siege of the city from the north since February 24 by Russia after having helped relieve Chernihiv early in the month, COL Mike Bianco, now a part of the brigade as staff officer on secondment from his military regiment of students from Ole Miss who are part of its brigade and soon considered to be promoted a brigadier general, is already resting after the brigade was moved back from the frontlines after a few weeks of fighting with the 12th Infantry Battalion (Separate) of the Ukrainian Ground Forces, as well as the UGF's 93rd and 72nd Mechanized Infantry Brigades and the National Guard's 12th and 5th Operational Brigades in their AOR. As one of the advisors to the brigade commander, his efforts have helped the brigade contribute in the ongoing battles to liberate towns and rural communities north and northeast of that city, wherein American Humvees, Strykers, M2 and M3 Bradleys and M113s as well as Abrams and M60 Patton tanks fired on Russians armed with BMPs, BTRs, GAZ Tigers and variants of the T-72 and T-80. Use of the M142 HIMARS and M270s by the rocket artillery battalion and M777s and M109s by the field artillery have shocked the Russians so much, the brigade's Ukrainian advisor who reports to the commander of the Territorial Defense Forces, who also serves as interpreter for the commander, BG Hopkins, has said of their effectiveness and that the Ukrainians have been fascinated by the use of these systems hoping that the UGF will soon purchase these systems for use soon.

The brigade's component units abroad have set camp and are building a new FOB the other day near Merefa township in Kharkiv District, preparing for a move to the Donbass to help UGF formations and the National Guard fight the invader in weeks after final operations in Kharkiv's north. The colonel is today walking on the encamped formations of the brigade and the works on the permanent FOB as the old temporary one had been yesterday handed over to the Ukrainians and is already approaching where the 1st Battalion, led by LTC Fenster, has stationed with the rest of the brigade after such days of combat ops with their Ukrainian counterparts. The battalion CO saluted him as he recognized the colonel, as well as A Company commander CPT Frazier and his XO CPT Tulowitzki. He was greeting them both that morning, asking them, "Where are my boys?"

The captain responded, "Right there near their camp, near the 1st Platoon."

At a sudden, the 6th platoon commander, 1LT Payton, recognized the commander of what was supposed to be the 2022 collegiate and ROTC mobilization unit of the 78th Brigade. But now given the war in Ukraine, it became part of A Company of the 1st Battalion as its 6th platoon out of 8 overall in the company.

"ASSEMBLE!" cries the lieutenant. The platoon steps into formation. It presents arms as COL Bianco arrives to where they are.

Greeting the colonel, it orders arms, and the lieutenant informs him that the platoon is all present and accounted for. Despite these days of tough battles, none of the Americans died, only little injuries among the young men. Thanks to that new Starlink system, finally these boys can continue studying for their collegiate degrees using their laptops and talk and write emails to their families while fighting in the frontlines in the Ukrainian northeast, their platoon commander has stated to the colonel.

"At ease, gentlemen," the colonel says.

He begins to talk to them regarding the hardships that took them to where they are now. Within the frontlines of a war between two nations, in the Ukrainian steppes and wide plain and hills away from their families, fighting against Russians and their allies in occupied Donetsk and Luhansk which for years have organized armed forces to support the pro-Russian governments of their regions, they have been doing that since late March when the whole brigade was called into battle in Irpin town, and then in Chernihiv. Elements of the 1st Battalion were committed into these battles with the rest of the brigade, with the fuel and ammo being shipped from Poland to help them directly as well as several elements of the young International Legion of Territorial Defense. Following the Irpin liberation, the brigade was among the first to assist newly-liberated Bucha and was witness to the retrieval of the first bodies of Ukrainian civilian dead of the Russian military massacres of opponents of Russia's invasion, a huge war crime that defined the evil ways of many service personnel of the Russian Ground Forces, either as officers, warrant officers, and professional and conscripted NCOs and enlisted personnel and blew open the truth of their atrocities before the world. Then they left to join the Ukrainian forces relieving the Siege of Chernihiv. Now they have been committed in pushing back Russians from Kharkiv Oblast and the districts comprising Kharkiv City and those north and northeast of it with 2 UGF and 2 National Guard brigades, as well as 2 territorial brigades. Amazingly, even at the cost of Ukrainian lives, no American has been killed so far in the ranks of the 1st Battalion in Kharkiv while there were fatalities there and in Chernihiv in the ranks of the armored cavalry squadron and the other battalions. Despite the young age of the lads and the fact that they have been fighting for almost 4 months they survived AND they still carried on their college studies remotely, with their universities slowly noticing that these brave collegiate boys are now fighting not just for Ukraine, nor for the American people, but for global democracy.

The 78th Brigade, the 1st American reserve brigade to be deployed fighting against Russia in this war, had been the first to help the determined Ukrainians in the weeks after the invasion, and soon other brigades would land into Eastern Europe to assist the fighting boys and girls from Cary in their struggle in support of their Ukrainian brothers and sisters, not just from the 46th Command but from other mobilized formations of the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard.

The days of battles in Ukraine cemented Colonel Bianco's boys into a tough, determined bunch of men with the rest of their company. None was more determined to lead them into the battlefield than 1LT Payton the platoon commander, getting orders from both company and battalion leaders, who are right there where they are encamped after being withdrawn from the Kharkiv front.

He told the colonel, "Sir, after almost three weeks in Kharkiv, these boys that you have trained in Cary and in Durham, and together with the regulars of the Army, including the Green Berets, have become young battle hardened men who fought with tenacity, bravery and firm determination for the nation. Every damn day, these boys and I their platoon commander have helped Able Company and the whole of the 1st Battalion fulfill their objectives in the defense of Ukraine on behalf of the American people and their armed forces as well as our NATO partners. Those damn Russians think that by fighting Ukraine they may be getting ready for the real charge of their forces against NATO, the European Union, and above all else, my country whose flag I swore to serve faithfully in the army. Now we've shown them that they are fighting against a people determined to keep their freedom and democracy alive - with all our support! Thanks for training us to be a battle hardened platoon fighting for our freedom no matter what, sir."

The colonel had thanked him in response to these remarks, knowing that all the hard work and training had finally paid off, now that they and the rest of A Company has had distinguished themselves in the Kharkiv front of the war with the rest of their battalion. He was indeed glad that his boys are still alive and in one piece, carrying all the weapons and gear they had from home into battle against Russia. All of them are equipped properly even with ear plugs for those in the artillery battalions and better personal equipment for all in the brigade.

"We still remember those days," 1LT Bradfield, the platoon second in command, said, "that we've almost died if not for the actions of the rest of the brigade and our Ukrainian brothers. Those Russians, sir, they were determined to kill us just because our government is helping Ukraine, but we proved them wrong." Such were those days that the platoon and almost all of A Company was almost in certain death when it and the whole of the 1st battalion were fighting companies of Russian infantrymen and tankers from battalion combat groups wherever they fought. In Kharkiv, this meant that days after being regrouped there they faced a reduced force from the legendary 4th Guards Tank and 2nd Guards Motor Rifle Divisions of the Russian Ground Forces's 1st Guards Tank Army, the seniormost armored and mechanized divisions, respectively of the Western Military District and the most prestigious of the country's divisions with lineage dating to the Second World War. These two elite divisions, together with the then newly reactivated 47th Guards Tank Division, were the most feared of the 1st GTA when they advanced into Kharkiv with the rest of the formation, but the Ukrainians stopped them in their tracks for the first three months of the war and are being pushed out of Kharkiv Oblast, the city, despite heavy Russian artillery and missile strikes, being saved from direct military action at a cost of thousands of lives lost among the Ukrainians and the few among the Americans of the 78th Brigade that arrived there joined by the 3rd NY of the 901st Division's 1st IBCT led by COL Boone and some other elements of the other major mobilization brigades - the 84th and 37th Brigade Combat Teams of the 169th and 892nd commands. The 3rd NY, together with the 62nd New York Metropolitan Light Infantry, led by COL Barnes on behalf of the regimental colonel, now BG Showalter, were the first two 169th Corps regiments deployed to Ukraine during the war and both had amazing records of personel sent to wars of the past and the present first to US Army regular formations and then the 78th Brigade. Now that after years of deploying their personnel as part of US Army regular units, the 46th, 169th

and 892nd commands were the first active reservists to fight in Ukraine, mainly to support the fellow Americans in the International Legion of Territorial Defense - and to fight alongside the men and women of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Now that the war had been already in its third month, there was no doubt that the Ukrainians have been noticing the brave Americans from Cary fighting for them. The platoon's second in command indeed stated that what they and the 1st Battalion did ensured the Russian offensive in Kharkiv to be a total disaster for them and a great win for Ukrainians, and have saved the brigade from certain defeat. But now, they are facing both the 200th and 80th Motor Rifle Brigades from the Russian 14th Army Corps from the Northern Fleet Coastal Defense, as well as elements of the 6th Army's 138th Brigade as the other infantry brigade, the 25th, had been recalled back to Russia for refitting. The two Northern Fleet infantry brigades had been activated in the past decade as the country's premier units in the Arctic but now had been fighting in northeastern Ukraine together with two regiments of infantry each from the 1st and 2nd Army Corps under the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Militias, respectively, and the 68th Marine Brigade of the Northern Fleet. The two Army Corps, which form part of the Russian forces of the Southern Military District, report to the governments of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and their respective defense ministries, while being under overall Russian command from Moscow and under the operational control of the Ministry of Defense led by General of the Army Shoigu.

"So you still remember those days you and the WHOLE 6th Platoon saved Able Company?" asked Captain Frazier.

"Yes, sir", replied 1LT Bradfield. "We saved the company and all of our battalion. The memories of having these men saving Able are still fresh, having to hit those T-80s and T-72s with Javellins and grenades, as well as those BMPs and armored carriers. And all those Russians."

"Indeed, Colonel Bianco, these boys saved all of us in the company from death. They risked all to save the brigade and our Ukrainian partners from being slaughtered by these Ruskies", Captain Frazier said. And he still remembers that one day that they faced Russians from the 14th Corps to the north of Kharkiv with the whole of the company. Just as they talked, Major General Scioscia arrived with the rest of the 1st platoon, including many of the "Tokyo Boys" from last year's national contingent that deployed in Japan. He was joined that day by BG Mark deRosa and MG Tony Reagins, part of the command staff (the recently promoted brigadier general part of the brigade staff being groomed to be the executive officer). The major general was part of then COL Scioscia's command as commandant of the 61st Los Angeles in the late 2000s and was assigned as part of the Anaheim city garrison. He asked the company commander, "Are you serious they saved the brigade, and my boys too as well?" "Yes", Captain Frazier said. "They saved you and the 1st platoon, many times. Most of all they saved my life and that of my fellow officers. Despite their young age, they showed their prowess in battle, and showed how powerful our forces are." 1LT Payton said, "Damn right we are, and we always still have these memories of fighting against these Russians." 1LT Austin said to him "That's a sure fact, and indeed we are grateful to you guys."

Chapter 2

FLASHBACK

SOMEWHERE NORTHEAST OF KHARKIV CITY

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2022

1015H EEST

That day elements of the 78th Brigade were assigned to help the 113rd Territorial Defense Infantry Brigade of the TDF, with attached International Legion elements, to liberate the village of Cherkas'ki Tyshky in Tsyркunу Township, Kharkiv District, after the township center had been liberated days ago with their help. The infantry and the armored battalions as well as the field artillery battalion equipped with the M777 towed gun as well as a MANPADS battery from one of the air defense battalions were all stationed there and the brigade had just set up its new barracks south of Derhachi town northwest of the city for easy access to the frontlines to the north and to the city itself as well as to avoid Russian artillery shelling. The rest of the brigade is in Korotych to the west awaiting for their move to the new location.

A and B Companies of the 1st Battalion have been the vanguard of the US contribution there for weeks after being relocated from Chernihiv following the successful lifting of the siege there early in the month in which the brigade took part. Now the General Staff of the Armed Forces has noticed that there ARE indeed Americans fighting for Ukraine outside of the International Legion, for the bravery of the 78th has awakened Americans to the truth that this war would soon evolve into a global one or another Cold War, either way would change the world just as the first Cold War was. C Company, the women's contingent, is now being prepped to move as the last of the 1st Battalion to relocate to Derhachi as the remainder of the brigade would be moved there once an expanded camp is finished thanks to the work of the combat engineers within the unit. Thus the ones on the field now are, together with the battalion HQ company, are A, B, D, E and F Companies, the heavy weapons company and the battalion cannon company affiliated with the brigade field artillery battalions.

Joining them in that part of the city's metro area were the 1st Battalion of the 83rd Philadelphia under LTC Thompson and the 1st battalion of the 71st Atlanta led by LTC Seitzer it's commanding officer, which are the reserve formations in this operation and are stationed a few miles away from Tsyркunу proper. A Company of the 83rd under 1LT Hoskins is with elements of the 1st Battalion. That morning the 1st and 2nd Battalions together with the armor, field and air defense artillery elements, as well as service support elements of the brigade have been on the move together with elements of the 113rd Territorial Defense Brigade of the Territorial Defense to fulfill their objectives north of Kharkiv and to regain parts of its expanded metropolitan area. That morning, in the midst of the hot late spring weather, they are leaving the newly liberated shire town and hromada seat of Tsyркunу which has been their home for days after assisting in the liberation of that town and are heading westwards on Cooperative Street after leaving the main street of the town towards their objectives of liberating much of the northern half of the township, including Cherkas'ki Tyshky village. Intel states that it is the 200th Brigade, nearest to the city itself, and a battalion of DPR militias are holding on to the northern part of that township after Tsyркunу had been liberated and the Russian infantrymen, tankers and gunners pushed back north. One or two of the battalions of the 200th are already there in the northwest of the shire town, having retreated following the battle days ago together with the field artillery and tank elements. Most are moving

away north, fearful of the advancing Ukrainians chasing them away and setting up new positions. The Bradleys together with 2 companies of M60 Super Pattons and a troop of M3 Bradleys provide the armored escort for the 113rd's battalion battle group and the M777 field guns have been placed south of the township's shire town to provide indirect fire support, with some of the air defense systems on Humvee chassis assigned to the advancing battalion formation.

At the lead M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles, 2 of them, plus one M113, are the company command and the Ukrainian interpreter of the company always joining them in the first M2, which has the company commander CPT Frazier and his deputies, with the second carrying among others the company lead medic and his XO Captain Troy Tulowitzki. The modernized M113A3 has 1SGT Gose, company first sergeant, on board. Following them are the Bradley IFVs and M1064A3 Mortar Carriers of the platoons. Joining them are Humvee and M113 combat armored ambulances and some others including ammo and signals vehicles assigned to the company behind the infantry as well as 2 MT-LBs assigned to the company HQ and painted in US Army camo, mounted with the M60 machine gun as well as one M4 Bradley FIST for forward artillery observers at the rear of the column. The MT-LBs hold members of the HQ platoon and part of the signals section. One more M4 Bradley FIST is manned by the 113rd's artillery observers and carries the Ukrainian national arms. Following them are elements of A Company of the 1st battalions of the 83rd and 71st led respectively by 1st Lieutenants Hoskins and Duvall on their Bradleys with the rest of the battalions' companies in the main highway with some of the 113rd's personnel together with battalion staff.

Having crossed the road bridge spanning the Kharkiv River, they arrived at 0910H at Cherkas'ki Tyshky, setting up their field HQ for the operation at an open field north of the intersection of Skillnyi and Kalnova Streets with another road leading to a local hotel. The 1st battalion began to mass its forces in coordination with the elements of the 113th Brigade thru the battalion's main Ukrainian Ground Forces liason officer who acts as the interpreter for the battalion and in charge of his fellow Ukrainian personnel assigned to the companies and the battalion HQ doing the same role. The section chef coordinates with the 113th's command for any action the brigade would be doing. Today the brigade is doing battalion level ops with two of the battalions working to fulfill their objectives, and the 78th BCT's 1st and 2nd Battalions has been assigned once more to help them. The main elements of the battalion are assembled there while west of their location are elements of the HQ company with the cannon company stationed east, with guns unlimbered from the M35 carrier trucks and the Avenger air defense systems also located to give much needed air defense power against any Russian Air Force fighter jets, transports and helicopters.

LTC Fenster, battalion commander, is stationed at the intersection with Captains Frazier and Arrietta of A and B Companies together with his battalion staff and their Ukrainian liasons working with the 113th. The D and E company commanders, Captains Ober and Zimmerman, are also there. Joining them are his executive officer, MAJ Sogard, and the company executive officers, CPT Tulowitzki, 1LT Fowler, 1LT Swaggery and 1LT Naquin and the first sergeants from the companies of the 1st Battalion sans C Company. The heavy weapons company commander and XO are there as well. They are being briefed on the final readiness of their units and any Russian positions they would encounter together with the Ukrainian counterparts, as well as on what the American strategy would be for that operation in this suburban town. Together with them are Captains Duvall and Hoskins from their respective regiments as well as their company XOs, 1LTs Nola and Riley. However they recieved word that the 1st Battalion 3rd NY has also arrived in Tsyркunь and will deploy their forces on the main road while A and B Companies are already on the move to the west to join them led by Captain Aaron Judge of the former. The battalion command, led by LTC Rojas, has been stationed at the township seat as well to monitor the situation at the frontlines. The battalion had been fighting the Russians in Kharkiv's north east for days now as well.

The plan called for the 1st Battalion 78th BCT to help the 113rd engage its targets in the village of Cherkas'ki Tyshky and its northern neighbouring village of Rus'ki Tyshky with the 3 companies from the 71st Atlanta, 83rd Philadelphia and 3rd NY while the 2nd battalion would operate on the main road of the township with the remainder of the 3 respective battalions while the brigade field and air defense artillery is stationed in the township seat save for the mobile Avenger SAM systems mounted in Humvees. Their mission is to remove any Russians from the two villages in the township from the 200th Brigade in conjunction with their Ukrainian counterparts.

Then the LTC received a call from brigade command stationed in the township seat. They are monitoring the battle thru a Bradley Command Vehicle and the comms lines are still active. The command delegation is mounted on two BCVs, one M577 Command Post Carrier on M113 chassis for the battalion sergeant major, two MT-LBs and a M1130. BG DeRosa had just dismounted and had called up MG Scioscia from the FOB in Derhachi regarding the readiness of the combat element. With him is MG Reagins, the representative of the 46th Command who serves as its operational commander in Ukraine, as brigade commander BG Hopkins, with his deputy COL Campbell the brigade XO, are still on the FOB and are moving there to help better supervise the operation at hand. BG DeRosa is the command's operational XO for Ukrainian operations.

“General DeRo, we understand,” the battalion commander noted, “and we are already coordinating with the 113rd. Intel states there are Russians from 2 infantry battalions of the 200th Motor Rifle Brigade stationed north of our positions, and the Ukrainians are heading there now. We are providing force multipliers for this and are fighting with them.” This was in response to a question by the brigadier general that they understood the directives given the previous day in a command briefing in Kharkiv with the Ukrainian liaisons and representatives of the 113rd Brigade regarding the operation they would jointly do that day after having helped liberate Tsyrukun. Just after their arrival, they linked up with the 72nd Mechanized Brigade of the UGF and helped them perform company-level ops with some large battalion level battles. And since April 12, they have been assigned to fight with the 113rd Territorial Defense Brigade, which they have been tasked for their ongoing operations, given that they are at the Kharkiv area. They have been in Tsyrukun since yesterday, given that they and the 113rd were together in the battles for the township seat. Now they are fighting to recapture the rest of the township to the north.

“Where is 1st Battalion going?”

“Up north, to fight Russians where we are now at Cherkas'ki Tyshky”, LTC Fenster answered. “The 113rd is already there with some of its companies with the rest of the main road. We've been asked to assist them in capturing the rest of the village. Ukrainian intel states that a few companies of the 2nd battalion, 200th Motor Rifle Brigade, are in the village, the rest to the north and on the main road where the 2nd Battalion and the rest of the 113rd are deployed now. We've been tasked to eliminate those elements or make them get out of the village, sir. We're waiting for two companies of the 1st Battalion 3rd NY who are already coming to our positions now to reinforce the battalion. Captain Judge of A Company leads that detachment.”

“I understand,” the brigadier general noted. “And two additional companies from 74th Division here as well?”

He answered yes, adding that their company commanders are there as well. Their position would be the basis of a future FOB for the Territorial Defense Forces in the future, but they are exploring other towns for the raising of new militia battalions under that force. And regarding who gave the order for the 3rd NY to be in Kharkiv, he responded that the order came from the desk of a fellow officer who trained with the 78th, COL Aaron Boone, their regimental commander.

“Be safe gentlemen, and good luck. The people of Kharkiv and all of Ukraine are hoping for a

successful operation.”

Just as the talk ended, Captain Judge arrived on his M2 Bradley with the elements of the 2 companies of 1st Battalion 3rd NY. He dismounts, and is joined by representatives of the company command, including his new company XO 1LT Kiner-Falefa appointed last March upon his transfer to the regiment, and the company first sergeant MSGT Rortvedt. 1LT Trevino is also with the 1st Battalion 78th BCT as part of those who were trained there before. Captain Frazier recognized his former fellow soldier, who was there in the Bronx with him as one of his lieutenants in the spring and summer of 2017 before moving to Queens with a transfer to the 62nd NY. The lieutenant Trevino was a part of the 61st Texas regiment which the captain was stationed for part of 2020. The captain is with elements of the company HQ and two platoons, with 1st platoon led by platoon commander 1LT Hicks, his XO 1LT Torres, a Venezuelan native who joined the regiment in the 2000s, and SSGT Rortvedt the platoon sergeant.

“Captain Judge sir!”

“Captain Frazier, sir. Belated congrats on your appointment. I was proud to be leading the men of the 3rd NY with you almost 4 years ago.”

“First Lieutenant Trevino, sir. Glad you’re back in the swing of things but in Eastern Europe,” the first lieutenant said.

The captain answered, “I still remember being in Arlington. But the memories will stay for as long as I live, lieutenant.”

The captains, after having saluted, were welcomed by the commanders of the companies of the 71st Atlanta and 83rd Philadelphia where they are as well as their XOs and first sergeants. Captain Judge was later welcomed by LTC Fenster, the 1st Battalion commanding officer, his XO, MAJ Sogard, the battalion sergeant major SGM Ronai and battalion staff. SFC Stanton of the 5th platoon of Able Company saluted his company commander in New York in the Bronx barracks, having joined the 78th’s 1st Battalion this spring on transfer, because he was part of the brigade’s mobilization platoon assigned twice as part of the 3rd Platoon. The captain was saluted as well by 1LT McCutchen, who was one of his officers in New York in the summer of 2018. Greeting one of his former officers in the battalion, reassigned first to Milwaukee before being recalled back to Cary, he remembered being with that battalion that year and said “Captain Judge, it’s nice to see you again, but this time, welcome to Ukraine.”

The captain from California was briefed by the 1st Battalion, 78th BCT commanding officer regarding the mission of their unit today, hoping that they would help in the operation that they would do together. He stated that “the 1st Battalion command sent me here with two companies of that very battalion to reinforce the 113rd Territorial Defense Brigade of the Territorial Defense Forces” and that they will help it fulfill its stated objectives that day. He agreed to join the companies of the 71st Atlanta and 83rd Philadelphia for this.

While he was briefed, the rest of A and B Companies of 1st Battalion 3rd NY took up time to rest in their staging area with elements of the 1st Battalion 78th BCT, save for the 1st platoon of 43 personnel who are already chatting with their counterparts in that battalion. They came from many countries, with Americans in the majority and those internationals wearing US Army uniform with their national flag patches. Among them is a Toms River native - CPL Marinaccio, who joined 1st Battalion’s A Company this year after being with the battalion based in Scranton. He recognizes Captain Frazier, who is like him a resident of the town, but no longer in the uniform of the 63rd NY but of the 78th Brigade, with his national flag patch. 5 years ago, he joined the regiment after a collegiate service stint in Delaware.

“Captain Frazier!”

Running towards the man and his company XO CPT Tulowitzki he saluted and introduced himself. “Corporal Ron Marinaccio, sir. Just like you, from Toms River in New Jersey. Fought with my regiment in Bucha and later on got moved to Kharkiv.”

“Glad you came here to fight for the Ukraine. And you were among the first Americans. For me and the 78th, we were in Irpin for our first combat missions.”

“A great pleasure, Captain Frazier. Fighting in the spirit of heroes of the past, I feel ready to carry on that fighting traditions of the peoples of our home state.”

The captain enjoyed also talking with a long time 1LT, Kyle Higashioka. A graduate of UC Berkeley he too is from California like Captain Judge - but is a Japanese American. However he began as an NCO (joining the regiment, then under BG Torre, in 2007 as a Corporal) and in 2016 was commissioned thanks to his studies in the OCS, joining the 1st Battalion as a 2LT in 2017. His usual battle companion, 1LT Gerrit Cole who was also trained in Cary, is with the 1st Battalion of the 78th instead as part of B Company. However, he began with the regiment in Pittsburgh with 1LT McCutchen and another part of the 3rd NY but now recalled to the 78th Brigade, SSGT Taillion, despite having Canadian heritage in one of his parents. They talked on the experience of serving in the same regiment as now BG Girardi, now reassigned as PAO chief of the 71st Chicago. He was their former commanding officer. The lieutenant and SSGT Taillion both recognized the captain who they met during his days with the 169th Cincinnati Infantry as a platoon and later company commander.

As the conversation continued, COL Bianco arrived in a Humvee to help direct the operation. “Ten-hut” was heard as the colonel disembarked from the vehicle to meet the men and to continue monitoring the situation on the ground. The 6th platoon’s commander, 1LT Payton, ran to the colonel together with his staff and SSGT Montgomery, together with LTC Fenster, LTCOL Andruw Jones whose son Drew is with the battalion, and the battalion staff present as well as SGM Ronai. All saluted the colonel, as well as the company commanders plus those of the 3 regiments who have been there that day to help that battalion. Then 1LT Payton recognized the presence of his platoon before their training officer.

“First Lieutenant Payton, sir. Elements of the 6th Platoon, Able Company of 1st Battalion, 78th IBCT, all present and accounted for. A pleasure for you to be here today.”

“Lieutenant Payton”, replied Colonel Bianco, “The road had been tough, but you and your boys have indeed made me proud. All that hard training has paid off, and I’m glad all of you are still here fighting for Ukraine and our freedom. Good luck today, gentlemen.”

“My pleasure, colonel”, the platoon commander replied.

1LT Bradfield the platoon XO and 2LT Wilson the platoon adjutant also saluted the colonel, telling him that they too are ready to fulfill their duty, having applied their training lessons and regimen in the first weeks since they and the rest of the 1st Battalion arrived in the country.

The colonel had arrived to help direct the operational work the 1st Battalion had been assigned for today, and having been briefed by LTC Fenster, MAJ Sogard and parts of battalion staff as well as its lead Ukrainian liaison on reports that elements of the 1st Battalion, 1st Motor Rifle (Infantry) Regiment, Donbass People’s Militia, and 2 battalions of the 200th Motor Rifle Brigade of the Northern Fleet Coastal Forces are stationed north of their area, and the 1st and 2nd Battalions have been informed by the commandant of the 113rd TDF Brigade covering Kharkiv Oblast to assist in their moving north, in gratitude for their assistance in the capture of Tsyrkunya a few days ago. The

Ukrainian liason stated in the intel and situationer reports that the 200th's presence is only reinforced by a few field artillery batteries and MBTs under brigade HQ from the artillery regiment and the tank battalion, respectively, the tanks being the T-80BVMs and the artillery made up of 2S7 Msta-S self-propelled howitzers from the brigade's two artillery battalions. Their mission is to help the 113rd in its operation to remove Russians from the twin villages north of Tsyркuny so that the whole of that township is cleared of Russians and their allies.

Upon receiving the reports, COL Bianco told everyone, "It's gonna be a long day ahead for us here. But as long as we do our best, we will drive the Russians away from the northern edges of Kharkiv, together. Mark my words, boys, this will be one of the biggest operations of this war, and General DeRosa is expecting all of us to play our part to help finish this operation. Don't spare any expense. We have a goal to do, to help Ukraine defeat Russia at all costs no matter what."

LTC Fenster replied that the battalion, together with the attached elements from other units of the brigade and the 169th Corps, is ready to fulfill their tasks for today, and will follow the right strategies needed to win the day. Then, he resumed the briefing conference informing the colonel that given the intel that in Cherkas'ki Tyshky elements of the Russian 200th Infantry Brigade and the 1st DPR Motor Rifles are stationed with more up north, given the consultations among the commanders and XOs of his subordinated units in the battalion he has agreed to implement the battle plan for the day. The colonel concurred and informed his superior officers via radio of their readiness.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

(AN: Given the recommendations by a fellow Tumblr writer, I have created a second chapter of this one shot story for the Tumblr fan writers there. This is dedicated to recently retired Olympic silver medal pitcher Edwin Jackson of Team USA who retired from active play by the time of this writing.)

1030H EEST

With the briefing now over, the strategy for the 1st Battalion 78th Infantry Brigade Combat Team was finally set, with the full blessing of brigade leadership and battalion command. The operation entailed the battalion following the elements of the two battalions of the lightly armed 113rd Territorial Defense Brigade of the Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces in liberating the villages of Cherkas'ki Tyshky and Rus'ki Tyshky while the 2nd Battalion joins the rest of the forces from that brigade in the main road of the township. The goals are to help the brigade liberate the northern villages of Tsyркuny from elements of the Russian 200th Motor Rifle Brigade of the Northern Fleet reinforced by a battalion of the Donetsk People's Militia's 1st Motor Rifle Regiment. They are supported by the M3 Bradleys of the armored cavalry squadron as well as the field artillery and air defense elements of the brigade. The battalion's strategy was to help defeat company or battalion sized elements of the 200th Motor Rifle Brigade and the 1st Motor Rifle Regiment as well as the 200th's T-80BVM MBTs of its tank battalion whose elements are in the village in a company formation, the rest of the companies are north of that area or on the main road alongside the rest of the SPG batteries as one battery is in the village equipped with the Msta tracked SPG. And also their additional role is to capture the village road junction located in the east of Cherkas'ki Tyshky which links it to Rus'ki Tyshky and the main road, which leads north to Borshchova and the border.

Basically the battalion's orders were to capture these two villages north of Kharkiv, pushing Russia's infantry and armor forces away from the city's suburbs, as well as artillery, as the 2nd Battalion moves on the main road alongside 3 battalions under 169th Corps' regiments (2 from 76th Infantry Division, one coming from the 901st Infantry) and word is now clear that a National Guard of Ukraine company is reinforcing the rear to help in the operation. In addition, their duty is to push away most of Russian artillery systems further from Kharkiv itself.

During the pre-combat brief, the company commanders were given their set orders for the day. A and B Companies would be the lead in the operation with D, E and F Companies, the latter assisted by CPT Jack Wilson, their founding commander, following them together with the battalion HQ company, with A Troop of the armored cavalry squadron and a tank company of the armored battalion using a modernized M60 Patton, as well as engineers helping in minesweeping and combat support ops and an air defense element mounted on Humvee platforms. The two field artillery battalions under the brigade would provide the much needed fire support using M777, M198, M108 and M109 systems, with batteries from the two assigned to the 1st Battalion set up on the rear and protected also by MANPADs and a company of TDF militias and joined by the two battalions' cannon batteries of M101 howitzers and Javellin platoons of the heavy weapons

companies. Three companies from the 1st battalions of the three regiments under 169th corps have been assigned to help 1st Battalion, the remainder to help the 2nd battalion clear the main road, as agreed upon that morning by their regimental commanders.

Before their company commanders would talk about the operation, LTCOL Fenster, 1st Battalion commanding officer, spoke to his boys from the battalion and their attached elements in the presence of COL Bianco and some of the brigade staff: “Gentlemen, this morning is just the start of yet another operation for elements of the 1st Battalion, 78th BCT. But today is yet another glorious day in our unit’s annals of history. This is the first task force styled-operation in our history as a brigade, with two of the battalions already fighting Russians and their allies from Donetsk with our Ukrainian brothers. We’ve done battlegroup styled ops before here, but now two of our infantry battalions are finally fighting together alongside the armor and artillery elements as well as support elements of the brigade present, for before this I’ve been given the orders from Brigadier General deRosa on his briefing call to the battalion command early today. Our task here, he said, is to remove Russians from the main highway of this township and its northern villages with the assistance of the Ukrainians of the 113rd Brigade and a company of National Guardsmen, helping to push back Russian guns from within range of the city itself and its suburbs and push these soldiers out for good away from it. In these past weeks, and even more today, all of us the men of 1st Battalion and the whole of the brigade are determined more than ever before to win this battle and the others to come for not just Ukraine but for our country and our NATO allies against the Russian aggressor threatening not just Ukrainians but ALL of us NATO countries at all fronts. In these past days, we’ve helped the 93rd Brigade do their jobs, now we’ve been helping these territorial militias as well as our fellow Americans in the International Legion. This is for their freedom and ours, boys. For the fallen in Bucha and all around this land, including those in the Kharkiv area, we will not stop our fighting with the Ukrainian people and her army, no matter what the costs. Understood gentlemen?”

“Sir yes sir” was the response of the boys.

COL Bianco then began to talk to the boys of the 6th platoon. Its commander 1LT Payton had stated that they are indeed ready once again, having perfected all they have trained for before in Irpin and Chernihiv with the rest of their company. This was the same sentiment shared by their XO and adjutant as well as its platoon sergeant. The colonel said that now would be a more better time for them to be better than ever, having shown their lot in earlier battles. “Now, gentlemen, its the time for us to show our strength once more in alliance with the Ukrainian people. I expect the best for you boys as you help the company achieve its objectives today, is that clear?”

“Sir yes sir” was the collective response. The colonel turned to the rest of the company stating his hope that the objectives of today’s operations will surely be met with success.

“Captain Frazier,” said the colonel, “I hope you and these personnel under your command achieve all the objectives for these operation, dead or alive. Not just America depends on this operation done. It is the Ukrainian people and our NATO partners and allies, and it will a big help for Ukraine if we flush out those Russians out of the range of Kharkiv.”

“We will do our best, colonel,” replied Captain Frazier.

“The same for us in B Company,” then said Captain Arrietta. He said that they too will do their best to get things accomplished and the Ukrainians assisted in removing Russian soldiers from the village borders, limiting thus the Russian attacks on Kharkiv city itself. This is what captains Ober, Zimmerman and Cupp stated as well for D, E and F Companies of the 1st Battalion, detailing their readiness to follow the order of the day. Captain Wilson, now a part of A Company staff, remarked as well that what the lads of F Company did in these past weeks in Chernihiv in support of the

Ukrainian forces relieving the Russian siege of the city stunned the battalion with their initiative and determination despite the young age of the boys and now they were ready to do it again.

Captain Judge then informed the colonel of his boys' preparedness for the combat ops they are about to do, saying, "Sir, given that all that the lads of the Bronx has gone thru, me and my boys are ready to fight for the nation and for the Ukraine. I have informed Colonel Boone that they are all prepared to fulfill the tasks for today."

Darren then informed him that he wishes the best as he prepares to help the 1st Battalion fulfill their objectives. He told him that they are assigned to help A Company led by his former superior, now Captain Frazier, to clear out Russians from Cherkas'ki Tyshky and support the Ukrainian offensive there.

1LT Aaron Nola of A Company 1st Battalion 83rd Philadelphia said the same. Given that they too were given the task to assist A Company, and that he has been given XO status in support of his commander 1LT Hoskins as his superior officer 1LT Harper has been called up to the colors because of his prior commitments before, he stated to COL Bianco that as part of the operation he felt proud to serve as part of the regiment raised and headquartered in Philadelphia, the birthplace of American independence, and that it was his duty to continue the city's heritage of leading in the defense of the nation in peace and in war. He also stated, "Being a New Orleans guy, I also bear in my heart the city's resistance in the War of 1812, and am ready to fight till the last with the boys from Philly."

The lieutenant from Sacramento then said, "No matter what happens today, colonel Bianco, we're ready to die carrying the arms of Philadelphia and the fighting legacy of her sons and daughters, sir. Most of all it is the American people, as well as the Ukrainian people already suffering after a few months of Russia's invasion, that we're ready to fight for at all costs. " Having served with the regiment since 2014 as an officer fresh from OCS, he became one of Bryce's deputies when he arrived in the city in 2019 on transfer from Washington. Since then he has served as one of his faithful comrades in arms.

The same sentiments were shared by Captain Duvall of A Company from the 1st Battalion of the 72nd Atlanta. Raised in Louisville, KY, he has served as the company commander beginning late last year taking over from long time commander 1LT Freeman. He knew the importance of the cause they were fighting for and why the country has to help Ukraine now in its time of need. In his words, he felt that "missing families and friends at home, I knew I had a band of brothers ready to stand by me fighting for freedom no matter what the cost." His boys, assisted by 1LT Riley his executive officer and 1SGT Matzek the company first sergeant, are positioned to support CPT Arrietta and the B Company lads.

Then the colonel got a cellphone call from MGEN Scioscia.

"Make sure my boys from Tokyo are ready to lead the battalion for today," said the major general, confident that the men are ready to do it again in northern Kharkiv Oblast. They indeed needed that motivation badly from the overall commander of the Tokyo contingent in order to get the ball rolling for today's operations. He stated that Captain Frazier will be ready to lead the boys of 1st Battalion to the battle field once more, determined to continue on their winning ways in support of their Ukrainian brothers, who over these past few weeks have started to understand the Americans fighting with them for a singular cause.

"They will do their best, Mike. I'm confident these boys of yours together with mine, now fighting in the same unit, are committed to do their duties for the country and to obey the order given to them today to remove the remaining Russians from the Tsyrkuny area in support of the

Ukrainians," replied Colonel Bianco. "I am truly amazed at what they did in past battles and am hopeful they will do it again."

"Good luck Colonel Bianco," replied the major general from Upper Darby. "Scioscia out."

After the call ended, LTC Fenster informed his operational commander that he's now ready to deploy the battalion for their operational goals for the day.

"Brigadier General DeRosa, sir, the 1st Battalion's ready to move out. We're ready to fulfill the orders for today's operation no matter what the cost, for the victory of the Ukrainian people, the very people we are fighting with today."

"Good luck gentlemen," replied the brigadier general. "Once more, America sends its prayers for your victories today and so does every Ukrainian. Do not fail this mission, boys, Ukraine needs this one and so does the USA. Move those boys now!"

"DeRosa, we will do our best, sir. We will not fail. We will not doubt all of America and Ukraine rooting for us once more," replied the commander. Then he presented his phone so that the boys will hear his order clearly to the battalion: to fulfill all objectives and help 2nd Battalion, as well as the Ukrainians of the 113rd Brigade, clear Tsyркunу township once and for all so that the Ukrainians will now be set to clear the areas north of Kharkiv from Russian forces with their support. Intel stated that the 1st Motor Rifles from the Donetsk People's Republic are moving out with a battalion of wheeled mechanized infantry to support the Russian 2nd Battalion of the 200th Motor Rifles, with elements of its 1st battalion and the 4th armored battalion in reserve as force multipliers. It is the duty of the Ukrainian 113rd TDB to push them out, and thus the 78th Brigade's 1st and 2nd battalions, as well as the 3 battalions from the 169th Corps regiments, have been tasked to assist them by all means. Thus the 1st Battalion must not fail in its objectives no matter what.

After the call, the battalion commander replied, "We will do whatever it takes. Kharkiv's future rests on our efforts, general."

"Good luck LTC Fenster," answered the brigadier general. "And make sure these boys end the day safe and in a joint US-Ukrainian victory. DeRosa out."

"Good luck to you as well, brigadier general, sir," replied LTC Fenster. "We will continue to update via radio. Fenster out, Slava Ukraini."

"Heroyam Slava", replied the brigadier general.

"This is Major General Reagins speaking, colonel. Make sure these Russians are fucked when your boys fight them with the Ukrainians."

"We will do just that. I am confident than ever these boys will end the day with a win for Ukraine, sir", replied Darren.

The commander's Ukrainian interpreter informed him as well in English and then phoned the commander of the 113rd Territorial Defense Brigade that the 78th will soon be arriving to help reinforce their positions. He then phoned a member of the ILTD operating there to be on standby as the 78th too is helping in their combat ops.

With the order now granted to proceed, the 1st Battalion was now in battle mode once more.

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