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# **RUSSIAN FAKE NEWS CORNER, a message to Russian citizens & Russian-speaking people**

## **RUSSIAN FAKE NEWS CORNER**

**Who overpowered Russian forces in Kharkiv Oblast? NATO, according to Moscow**

***A message (also in Russian here) to Russian citizens and Russian-speaking people***

by Aaron Rhodes & Willy Fautré

EU TODAY (19.09.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3QWg4QE> – For the first

time since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, government officials have acknowledged defeat on the battlefield. The Russian Ministry of Defense has thus embraced a new information (or more precisely “propaganda”) strategy in openly admitting to the Ukrainian military’s dramatic success in almost completely re-claiming Kharkiv Oblast.

This change in the Kremlin’s information strategy has, in turn, opened new questions for Russian citizens to ponder: What are the reasons for this serious setback? Who is to blame?

Of course, blame cannot be placed on President Putin, the architect of Russia’s illegal, ill-conceived and miserably executed invasion. His adventure has killed or wounded as many as [70,000-80,000 Russian soldiers](#), according to Western intelligence services at mid-August, not to mention [5827 Ukrainian civilians](#) as of 11 September, according to the UN, and 9000 Ukrainian soldiers killed defending their country.

Putin is now subtly being recast as among these victims of the war, misled by incompetent intelligence officials, and badly served by the military leaders he entrusted with the task of “liberating” Ukraine, ridding it of “Nazis,” and allowing its people to rejoin Mother Russia.

We have seen supplicant state apologists on “Russia 1” television searching for excuses and explanations; some, risking their own careers and safety, have begun to openly question Putin’s war, while steering clear of the taboo subject of Putin’s command responsibility.

Others have suggested that not the Ukrainian army, but undercover foreign soldiers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) opened the way to drive Russian military units from Kharkiv Oblast.

Indeed, the admission that Russia suffered defeat in Kharkiv by Ukrainian forces would contradict a central pillar of

official Russian doctrine: The Ukrainians are an inferior people; Ukraine is not a state or a nation at all, and certainly not one capable of defeating Russia militarily.

According to commentaries heard on Russia 1, the official state TV channel, "The army of this small corrupt Ukrainian country would not have been able to achieve such a success in such a short time against the Russian army. It is the work of foreign fighters and NATO units. Russia has to face the 30 member states of the NATO." Some commentators, either out of ignorance or seeking to amplify the disproportion between NATO and Russia, claimed Russia was fighting "a coalition of 53 countries."

NATO has been consistently blamed by Moscow for provoking Russia's war against Ukraine, and is now being blamed for Russia's defeats. Both arguments are completely false. It is perhaps useful to review some basic facts about NATO.

### ***What is NATO?***

NATO is a defensive – not offensive – military instrument formed by an alliance of 30 democratic member states to preserve peace, and to guarantee their security, their defence, their sovereignty and their common political principles. Decisions to run and activate NATO are taken by the democratically elected political leaders of the member states.

The purpose of NATO, as set forth in the [North Atlantic Treaty](#) of 1949, is collective defence. The preamble to the Treaty states that its signatories

*"are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security."*

Article 3 of the Treaty clarifies that its purpose is to “maintain and develop” NATO members’ “individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”

The key article in the Treaty is Article 5, in which:

*“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked...”*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, numerous new democracies have sought to join the NATO alliance. Members of those societies have seen in NATO membership not only a source of security from military assault, but internal security as well. Seeking integration in the alliance was their choice, not the result of NATO proselytism. By joining the alliance, members agree to place their military forces under civilian and democratic control.

According to its official language, NATO membership is open to any “European state in a position to further the principles of the [North Atlantic Treaty] and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.” Fourteen (14) formerly communist states have applied and been admitted since the dramatic changes that began in 1989, but NATO has not “expanded,” as alleged by official Russian claims. NATO has accepted qualifying states whose citizens and leaders have requested membership for their own reasons. Indeed, Russia’s unprovoked war against Ukraine has moved Sweden and Finland to seek membership in the alliance, and their accession has been approved.

***What NATO has and has not done***

NATO has no direct involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, nor does any member of NATO have any direct involvement. NATO, as an organization, has strongly denounced Russia's invasion; the NATO website affirms that "NATO stands with the people of Ukraine and its legitimate, democratically elected president, parliament and government. The Alliance will always maintain its full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders."

In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine beginning in 2014 in the Donbas and Crimea, NATO has taken a number of steps. Working together, NATO members have bolstered defenses, particularly those of the Baltic states, Poland and Romania, with allies placing thousands of additional troops under direct NATO command in Europe. Russia's war has resulted in the United States now having more than 100,000 troops stationed in Europe. Other members, most notably Germany, have agreed to strengthen their military capacities.

NATO has assisted Ukraine with military capacity building, and "is helping to coordinate Ukraine's requests for assistance and is supporting Allies in the delivery of humanitarian and non-lethal aid."

Indeed, some (not all) NATO members have contributed billions of EUR in humanitarian, economic and military assistance to Ukraine as the government and society resist Russia's assault, which has indiscriminately destroyed much of the country's civilian infrastructure.

Make no mistake, it was the Ukrainian soldiers, not NATO or American troops, who, with their "Blitzkrieg" strategy, drove the Russian army out of Kharkiv Oblast. In doing so, they used some arms paid for by the people of numerous free societies, members of NATO, whose governments donated those weapons on the basis of legitimate democratic processes. And those Ukrainian troops were acting on orders from their own elected government, not from NATO, as they fought for their

land, the freedom and sovereignty of their country, and the future of their children.

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**The authors urge the Russian-speaking readers of this article to republish it on their own websites or blogs and through their social media or to share it otherwise with Russian citizens**

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