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Analysis of the experience of organizing the resistance movement by the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in repelling armed aggression of the russian federation against Ukraine

Resume. The article analyses the experience of organizing the resistance movement by the Special Operations Forces during the repulsion of the russian armed aggression against Ukraine. The problematic issues in the organization of the resistance movement by the Special Operations Forces are identified.

Keywords: special operations forces; national resistance; resistance movement; armed aggression; underground.

Problem statement. Changes in the forms and methods of warfare, which is highlighted by the analysis of the hybrid war waged by the russian federation against Ukraine in the form of a combination of various actions regarding the covert use of regular troops (forces), illegal armed groups and terrorist organizations, the use of propaganda, sabotage, terror, and subversion in Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the russian invasion of Ukraine, the state has faced the acute issue of organizing a resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territory. The resistance movement is considered an integral part of Ukraine's defence, which is a system of military, information and special measures, the organization, planning, preparation and support of which is carried out to restore state sovereignty and territorial integrity in repelling armed aggression against Ukraine.

In view of the above, there is an urgent need to analyse and summarise the experience of organizing the resistance movement by the Special Operations Forces (SOF) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The organization of the resistance movement in Ukraine is currently receiving much attention. A study of the historical retrospective of the Ukrainian resistance movement was carried out [1]. The authors analysed the historical retrospective of the Ukrainian resistance movement and the regulatory and legal framework for its organisation. However, it is worth noting that this topic remains insufficiently studied and requires in-depth analysis, and most of the important issues in this area remain open.

The purpose of the article is to analyse the experience of using the Special Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in repelling the armed

aggression of the russian federation against Ukraine in order to provide recommendations for organising a resistance movement.

Research methods: systematic analysis, induction and deduction, comparison, generalisation and systematisation.

Presentation of the main material. An integral part of countering the full-scale armed aggression of the russian federation is the organisation of a resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territory by the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In a broad sense, these are the actions organised by the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, undertaken by the population in the occupied territories (annexed, temporarily occupied), which are dissatisfied with the actions of the occupation authorities and their troops; as well as these are counteractions using active (violent) and passive (non-violent) methods. The favourable conditions for organising a resistance movement are the assistance of a motivated population to counteract the occupation authorities and aggressor forces, which by their actions violate the rights of the population in the occupied territories and pose a threat to the lives and freedom of local residents.

Since the beginning of russia's so-called "special military operation" against Ukraine, the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been using the Temporary Doctrine of the Use of State Defence Forces, the doctrines of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Special Operations and Psychological Operations.

At the beginning of russia's large-scale invasion, the following tasks were assigned to the SOF:

1. Performing special intelligence tasks.

2. Conducting special actions to destroy (disable) important state and military facilities of the enemy.

3. Combating the enemy's sabotage and reconnaissance forces and illegal armed groups.

4. Preparation and execution of the resistance movement.

5. Conducting special and psychological operations (actions).

6. Implementation of measures related to the prevention, detection and suppression of terrorist activities.

The "resistance movement" concept was enshrined in 2021 as a strategic level with the adoption by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the Law "On the Principles of National Resistance" [2]. The resistance movement is carried out with the onset of a special period in the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine, which was captured by the aggressor (enemy) during the armed aggression against Ukraine.

According to Ukrainian law, the components of national resistance in Ukraine are:
territorial defence;
resistance movement;
preparing Ukrainian citizens for national resistance.

This Law defines the legal and organisational basis of the national resistance, the basis for its preparation and conduct, and the tasks and powers of the security and defence forces.

In practice, this is implemented by:
ensuring that the SOF Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine exercises his/her authority to control the actions of the resistance movement;

organising and implementing measures to prepare, conduct and support the resistance movement, as well as ensuring control over their implementation;

active participation in the development of draft laws of Ukraine and other regulatory acts on the resistance movement;

conducting the necessary calculations and developing proposals and analytical materials for the SOF Commander of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to make decisions on the resistance movement;

studying, analysing and assessing the situation that affects the implementation of measures to prepare and conduct a resistance movement, developing forecasts of its possible development, and providing measures to respond promptly to changes in the situation;

organising the execution of orders and directives on the resistance movement;

selecting people who have expressed a desire to become members of the resistance movement;

determining the need for resources required to prepare, maintain and lead a resistance movement;

creation and use of an information, communication system to organise and ensure the fulfilment of the tasks of the resistance movement;

preparing and submitting proposals to the leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on the involvement of forces and means of the security and defence forces in the organisation, preparation, support and execution of resistance movement tasks;

organising the documentation of management activities and archival storage of documents on the resistance movement;

organising cover for the activities of units involved in the resistance movement.

Until 2021, the activities of the resistance movement in the occupied territories did not have a clear legal framework, and citizens cooperated with the Ukrainian special services at their own risk.

Outnumbering the Armed Forces of Ukraine many times over, the aggressor forces managed to partially occupy certain territories of Ukraine. At the same time, a certain part of pro-Ukrainian local residents at one point found themselves under occupation with minimal chances of safely leaving for the government-controlled territories of Ukraine.

Realising this, the pro-Ukrainian residents of the temporarily occupied territories began to resist, and the first thing they did was to hold patriotic rallies and obstruct the movement of military convoys, especially in the south of Ukraine.

For example, on 27 April 2022, more than 500 people took to the square in Kherson. Unfortunately, this period ended rather quickly due to the use of small arms and special means by the Russian military to disperse such actions.

In response to the aggressor's actions, Ukrainian society moved to the resistance movement.

Before the war, the city of Melitopol in the southern Zaporizhzhia region was known only for the fact that every year it became the 'capital of Ukrainian cherries'. Some people might also have known about the presence of a military airfield of the Air Force of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Melitopol.

However, it was from the beginning of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine

that the area around Melitopol became the true epicentre of the Ukrainian resistance movement.

During the first two months of the war, the Ukrainian resistance movement was able to carry out several successful sabotage attacks using mines and explosives.

On 18 May 2022, an armoured train of russian troops and railway tracks were damaged.

On 24 June 2022, Dmytro Savluchenko, the so-called “Head of the Department of Family, Youth and Sports of the Military-Civilian Administration of the Kherson Region”, was liquidated [3].

At the same time, it was a manifestation of the cohesion of local communities and the unification of efforts of both special services and resistance forces, as well as the social movement.

One example of these actions is the explosion of a railway bridge near the village of Yakymivka on 28 April 2022, which was actively used by the russians to transport ammunition and equipment from the annexed Crimea to the line of contact with the Ukrainian Armed Forces [4].

The successful conduct of these special actions by the resistance movement led to several consequences not in favour of the occupiers, namely:

first and foremost, it is a partial diversion of russian efforts from fighting on the contact line and the transfer of their forces and means to search for saboteurs in and around Melitopol;

secondly, we managed not only to disrupt but also to stop the occupiers' logistical support in this area for some time;

third, and no less important, is, of course, psychological pressure on the occupiers. The russian military felt and saw that they were not welcome in Ukraine.

What else is notable about the operation to blow up the bridge near Melitopol?

For the first time, the Ukrainian military took responsibility for this sabotage on the temporarily occupied territory.

“The destroyed bridge is the result of the work of the resistance group of the SOF of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” the SOF Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said in its statement.

Analysing the resistance activities taking place in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, it can be concluded that the resistance movement involves at least three components.

The first is a guerrilla warfare. This is when civilians took up arms yesterday and “went into the woods”, carrying out attacks and sabotage against the russian invaders. Such units were formed using a territorial approach in all areas of the russian

offensive, as voluntary formations of territorial communities.

The second component is the underground movement. These are civilians who stay and do not leave after their towns or villages are occupied by russian troops. They may cooperate or even be part of the occupation authorities. But at the same time, they provide valuable information to the Ukrainian military about ammunition depots, routes of movement, locations of the russian military and local officials who cooperate with them, etc.

They sabotage the work of the russian occupation authorities and organise special actions themselves. This is confirmed by a series of assassination attempts on officials of the russian occupation administration in Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

For example, on 18 June 2022, an action was taken to physically destroy the former head of the Kherson colony, Yevhen Sobolev [5].

This action instilled in the minds of the occupiers and traitors a panic fear of punishment for their crimes against the Ukrainian people.

The third component of the resistance movement is the auxiliary forces. These are people who are loyal to or sympathetic to Ukraine without bearing arms. They help with information, money, and participate in the distribution of leaflets, ribbons, graffiti, etc.

At the same time, information support for the resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territories during the repulsion of russia's full-scale armed aggression became an integral part of the resistance.

The successful operations of the Ukrainian resistance movement in almost all temporarily occupied territories, including Crimea, forced russia to strengthen its administrative, police and counterintelligence regimes.

Its activities included the following:

- a ban on pro-Ukrainian rallies;
- wiretapping and monitoring of telephone calls and social media of the local population in order to search for informants of the special services of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and pro-Ukrainian residents;
- search for former ATO/JFO participants and public figures;
- conducting searches in the homes of civilians;
- detentions and arrests of activists and journalists;
- blocking access to Ukrainian television channels for the local population;
- detention of Ukrainian citizens for the slightest manifestation of a pro-Ukrainian position;

- abductions of heads of local educational institutions, activists, journalists, and public figures;

- collecting information about residents who have left their apartments and houses for "alienation" and accommodation of russian military and civilians;

- introduction of special passes;

- introduction of a curfew;

- replacement of Ukrainian Internet providers with russian ones;

- granting access to pro-russian radio stations while simultaneously excluding Ukrainian radio stations from broadcasting.

To solve the problem of the Ukrainian resistance movement, the command of the russian occupation forces decided to engage combined arms units, thereby weakening its reserves.

The occupation authorities of the russian federation did not take the same measures to influence the population of Ukraine:

in Melitopol, there were "good people" acting;

in Mariupol, Nova Kakhovka and Kherson, the situation was the opposite, and the physical destruction of Ukrainian patriots was not neglected.

And the longer the occupation lasts, the harder it is for people to resist. Some residents are returning to work - even if it means supporting the russian authorities.

From the first days of the invasion, the invaders began to "Russify" the educational process, forcing school teachers and kindergarten teachers to resume teaching in Russian according to an incomprehensible Russian curriculum.

Almost all teachers and directors of educational institutions in the occupied territories have written letters of resignation. In order to intimidate educators and force them to cooperate, the russian occupiers abducted the head of the Melitopol City Department of Education, Iryna Shcherbak.

Over time, this practice spread to all occupied territories. The russian aggressors, with the help of "imported" education specialists and collaborators, resumed the educational process in schools, but the teaching of the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature and history of Ukraine was banned.

In order to organise the work of the russian occupation authorities, representatives of the occupation forces tried to persuade Ukrainian leaders and officials of state and local governments, enterprises, educational institutions, the media, etc. to cooperate.

If this did not work, they tried to use collaborators from among the pro-russian

population who agreed to cooperate. Or they would bring along appointed officials. There are also numerous cases of physical violence and reprisals.

As a means of adequately counteracting the establishment of the russian occupation authorities by attracting collaborators from among the pro-russian population, the Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine should open criminal proceedings for treason in the event of such facts.

It should be noted that most of the collaborators have or had ties to pro-russian parties, such as the Party of Regions, the Opposition Bloc, the Opposition Platform for Life or communists. Their activities during martial law were banned by law.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the russian federation, information influence on the occupiers has been constantly carried out by disseminating psychological influence materials through certain information resources created by the SOF Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

In particular, they include:

- website of the National Resistance Centre;

- the underground newspapers Holos Partizana and Sprotyv;

- the Sprotyv radio channel of the liberation movement, which covers resistance news on the Internet;

- YouTube and Telegram channels;

- relevant social media groups.

These information sources have become not only a chain of coordination for the resistance movement, but also a significant information support for civilians, a bridge between the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories and free Ukraine.

In addition, the command of the Special Operations Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine created the Yellow Ribbon civil resistance movement in April 2022 in the territories temporarily occupied by the russian federation.

The initial purpose of its creation was to consolidate the local population and show defiance to the occupation authorities.

For example, on 25 April 2022, the movement's coordinators called on the Telegram channel to hang Ukrainian flags and yellow ribbons on the streets, in crowded places, and not only in the temporarily occupied territories. This was a way to show their public position on the war on the territory of Ukraine to the whole world.

The movement also took on the organisation and conduct of peaceful actions in the occupied cities. After the occupiers brutally cracked down on these actions, the movement's coordinators decided to act in the online environment.

For example, when it became clear that it was not possible to physically hold a rally in Kherson, an online rally in support of Kherson was held on Instagram on 17 June 2022. The action gathered 36,000 people, 75,000 likes and almost 20,000 shares.

The indefinite action "Stop Referendum" was the next step. The organisers aimed to disrupt the pseudo-referendums in the temporarily occupied territories and disrupt the issuance of Russian passports.

In the course of these actions, leaflets against the pseudo-referendums were distributed, and photo and video recordings of the pseudo-referendum participants were made in cooperation with the Ukrainian IT community. The activists also published data on the locations of the so-called "referendums", as well as personal data of the "heads of election commissions" in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. This information allowed for the opening of criminal proceedings against these individuals.

In July 2022, Yellow Ribbon announced the launch of an open-ended campaign called "Crimea - Time to Go Home", "Donetsk – Ready" and "Luhansk – Ready", and "Mariupol is Ukraine".

This has become another channel for the Armed Forces of Ukraine to obtain intelligence.

Starting in July 2022, Yellow Ribbon coordinators began offering cash rewards for information about the occupiers' locations.

On 07 August 2022, the movement offered a reward of 10 bitcoins or 230 thousand US dollars for the arrest of Crimea's 'gauleiter' Sergei Aksyonov or information about his exact location.

This measure was aimed not only at physical destruction, but also at the psychological effect on the invaders.

On 19 October 2022, the Yellow Ribbon Movement, along with other fighters for Ukrainian integrity, received the Andrei Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought from the European Parliament, the European Union's top human rights award.

On 21 November 2022, the Day of Dignity and Freedom, the movement organised a Yellow Ribbon flash mob on social media [6]. Participants were encouraged to tie a yellow

ribbon and post a picture with the relevant hashtag. Ukrainians and foreigners around the world joined the campaign, including a large number of politicians, musicians, athletes and scientists who tied yellow ribbons. In addition, the symbol of public resistance was displayed at the Mission of Ukraine to the European Union in Brussels and at the Ukrainian Antarctic station Akademik Vernadsky. In this way, the civilised world emphasised its position on the war on the territory of Ukraine.

Conclusion. Thus, the experience of performing the SOF tasks has shown that organising a resistance movement in the temporarily occupied territory is important in repelling armed aggression.

Based on the analysis of the experience of organising the resistance movement and its further implementation, the following is proposed:

involvement of a larger proportion of citizens in the resistance movement, which requires the development of national campaigns to raise awareness and engage citizens in the resistance movement, including the creation of training programmes and information resources [8];

availability of state support (funding, material resources and legal support for the resistance movement);

international support to strengthen the capacity of the resistance movement;

developing a strategy to ensure the mobility and flexibility of the resistance movement;

effective communication and coordination between different components of the national resistance system to ensure coherence and effectiveness of actions;

creating and improving the infrastructure of the resistance movement.

Prospects for further research. The SOF is one of the main factors of both deterring and repelling external aggression and strengthening the State's defence capability. Based on this, there is a need to create a powerful and trained resistance movement capable of effectively deterring the aggressor and preventing further attacks on Ukraine. The procedure of interaction between the SOF and other components of the Defence Forces needs to be regulated.

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Аналіз досвіду організації руху опору Силами спеціальних операцій Збройних Сил України під час відсічі збройної агресії РФ проти України

Анотація

З початком вторгнення РФ на територію України перед державою гостро постало питання про організацію руху опору на тимчасово окупованій території. Рух опору вважається невід’ємною складовою оборони України, яка є системою воєнних, інформаційних і спеціальних заходів, організація, планування, підготовка і підтримка яких здійснюється з метою відновлення державного суверенітету і територіальної цілісності під час відсічі збройної агресії проти України.

Метою статті є проведення аналізу досвіду застосування Сил спеціальних операцій (ССО) Збройних Сил України під час відсічі збройної агресії РФ проти України для надання рекомендацій щодо організації руху опору.

Досвід виконання завдань ССО показав, що організація руху опору на тимчасово окупованій території є важливою у відсічі збройної агресії.

На основі аналізу досвіду організації руху опору та його подальшого впровадження, пропонується:

залучення більшої частки громадян до руху опору, для цього необхідно розробити національні кампанії для підвищення обізнаності та залучення громадян для участі у русі опору, включаючи створення навчальних програм та інформаційних ресурсів;

забезпечення державної підтримки (фінансування, матеріальні ресурси та правова підтримка руху опору);

використання міжнародної підтримки для посилення можливостей руху опору;

розроблення стратегії для забезпечення мобільності і гнучкості руху опору;

ефективна комунікація і координація між різними компонентами системи національного спротиву для забезпечення злагодженості та ефективності дій;

створення і вдосконалення інфраструктури руху опору.

Ключові слова: сили спеціальних операцій; національний спротив; рух опору; збройна агресія; підпілля.