

Sadly, war is not only a tragedy and the death of thousands of people. For many, this is also a sure way to goldbrick. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has already breathed vigor into the international arms trade, but this is only the beginning. The fact is that it has given terrorists of all stripes, rogue states and separatist groups worldwide a unique chance to restock their arsenals with fundamentally new and previously inaccessible types of weapons.

The start of Russia's military operation in Kyiv and a number of other Ukrainian cities set in motion the process of uncontrolled distribution of weapons. Some particularly enterprising residents of the Ukrainian capital were acquiring about a dozen Kalashnikov assault rifles each day, but not for reasons of defending their country. Before long, offers for the sale of weapons at rock-bottom prices appeared on the darknet, and criminals and ordinary citizens alike were only too happy to buy small arms to protect their property from marauders. A black market for arms started to emerge...

The supplies of huge numbers of man-portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, such as Javelins and Stingers, almost immediately led to their uncontrolled squandering. In the Ukrainian segment of the "shadow Internet," Javelins are available for prices ranging from several thousand to several hundred dollars apiece, paid in cryptocurrency. The market is full of double-dealers, of course, but serious sellers and buyers quickly find each other. Absurdly enough, some of these weapons are bought by pro-Russian separatists, who already have a lot of them, taken as war trophies. However, the buyers also include representatives of Albanian criminal groups, radical Islamists and terrorists of every hue. They want more and more and the Ukrainian military is only too happy to oblige. Indeed, with Russia's ongoing military advance, any equipment can be written down as combat losses, and if it pops up somewhere in the Middle East, who will bother to figure out where it came from?



A heavy machinegun or a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile system are the dream of any terrorist. Now every airliner taking off or landing is at risk, just as military transports stationed at bases in NATO countries. The purchase of weapons was of the main problems that terrorists of all stripes in Europe faced for decades. Dozens of them were nabbed while trying to get a grenade launcher or a hand-held anti-aircraft system. No longer. All they have to do now is take a carefully handed over container and, with the help of corrupt Ukrainian border officials, take it to anywhere in Europe. In fact, none of the EU airports is already safe, because the number of MANPADS “lost” by Ukraine goes into the thousands, and no one really knows just how many hundreds of them have already changed hands. Especially now that all such “high-tech” portable weapons come with instructions in Ukrainian and English. So it’s only a matter of time before any ISIS-liked group puts them to use.

This is only part of the problem, though. Eager to get rich and avoid the frontlines, Ukrainian military supply officers readily sell more serious weapons, such as self-propelled howitzers, like “Caesars” and “PzH 2000s.” At least two such transactions are known to have already taken place, with equipment, each worth more than \$7 million, sold for just \$60,000. Chances are that the Russian military was among the buyers, but this is not certain. Besides, disassembled weapons systems can be delivered to just about anywhere in

the world. Or you can keep them in place for the time being, waiting for right moment.

As a result, we have a paradoxical situation. Ukraine, which has spent years selling weapons left over from the Soviet Union, is now selling Western weapons generously supplied as part of NATO's lend-lease program. Minor export and registration snags are more than made up for cheap and speedy transactions. Looks like the fate of Europeans who will be killed by grenade launchers, shot down in planes and, possibly, fired at by howitzers sold by Ukrainian military supply officers, bothers no one. Least of all the Ukrainian commissaries, who are in a hurry to enrich themselves before the war is over.



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