

Battalion That Killed Over 2,000 Russians in 2 Months - Rob Lee x UAV Commander "Shram"

June 29, 2026 · Duration: 52:20

Rob Lee sits down with Lieutenant Colonel Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty — commander of UAV Battalion "Corsair" within Ukraine's 38th Marine Brigade, operating in one of the hottest sectors on the Donetsk front. Tovsty built the Corsair battalion from scratch in 2022, starting with two men and a Mavic, and scaled it into a five-division drone force that became a model for the entire Marine Corps.

Rob Lee

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Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty

Commander of UAV Battalion "Corsair"

Samuel P.N. Cook

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EPISODE SUMMARY

In this gripping episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast, host Sam Cooke and renowned military analyst Rob Lee sit down with a UAV battalion commander known as "Shram," whose unit reportedly killed over 2,000 Russian soldiers in just two months. The conversation traces the battalion's remarkable evolution—from a scrappy two-man operation into a full-fledged fighting force—offering a rare, ground-level view of how drone warfare is reshaping the modern battlefield.

Shram walks listeners through the technological revolution unfolding along the front, breaking down the tactics that define this new kind of war. He explains how Ukrainian forces read the rhythms of the frontline across changing seasons, counter Russia's infiltration tactics, and confront elite enemy formations like the notorious Rubicon unit and Russia's emerging unmanned systems branch. The discussion doesn't shy away from hard moments either, including the tense period when Starlink went dark and what that meant for operations in the field.

At the heart of the episode is a detailed look at strike doctrine and logistics. Shram unpacks the three-layer strike approach, the deep targeting of Russian supply lines, and the very different challenges of defending urban positions versus open field positions. He offers candid, practical insights into the ongoing debate between fiber optic and radio-controlled drones—explaining why fiber optic is no cure-all—and shares hard numbers on FPV accuracy rates and the persistent problem of sourcing quality cable.

The latter half dives into the nuts and bolts of running a UAV battalion: echeloned logistics, the point system used to track and incentivize performance, and the full anatomy of how such a unit is organized and sustained. Shram closes with sharp, hard-won lessons for foreign militaries watching this war and trying to prepare for the conflicts of the future.

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Chapter 1: From Two Men to Battalion

Samuel P.N. Cook [0:00]

Hi, it's Sam Cooke, the founder and co-host of the Ukraine Military History Podcast. Welcome to another episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast with Ukraine military analyst Rob Lee, who's the world's foremost expert as it pertains to how they fight. Before we start this episode, I just wanted to make a quick word to mention our sponsors. This podcast is funded by the Borderlands Foundation. The Borderlands Foundation is a foundation that I established to make sure Ukraine's heroes are never forgotten. We have two main centers that sponsor this podcast: the Ukraine Military History Institute — an English and Ukrainian-speaking center whose mission is to translate Ukraine's history from Ukrainian into English for the world to consume and learn from — and the Ukraine Center for Traumatic Stress, dedicated to research and raising awareness and bringing cutting-edge therapies and protocols related to post-traumatic stress disorder into Ukraine. And finally, our last sponsor is the Borderlands Group, a for-profit company that funds the Borderlands Foundation and all of our programs. At the end of the podcast, I'm going to tell you a lot more about each sponsor.

Chapter 2: The New Technological War

Rob Lee [3:02]

Hi everyone, it's Rob Lee. I'm a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Today I've got another interview about the military situation in Ukraine with the commander of the UAV battalion for the 38th Marine Brigade. Great. Thank you very much for talking with me.

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [3:17]

Always glad to be here.

Rob Lee [3:18]

Thank you. Could you introduce yourself and maybe talk a little about your background?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [3:22]

Lieutenant Colonel Tovsty Vladyslav Yuriyovych, commander of UAV Battalion "Corsair." From 2022, with the start of the full-scale invasion, I led the defense group. We then formed our own UAV crew and began implementing experience and learning UAV systems. The Mavic 2 and Mavic 3 started showing their effectiveness, and then we began ramping up our efforts. We had one or two people working. We simply put it on a system, cooperated, created our own mini-unit, and began expanding it. I was in the battalion administration at the time, but I was working—

Rob Lee [4:00]

In the 30th?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [4:00]

Yes, in the battalion administration, in the position of paratrooper — as an airborne soldier — but performing tasks outside my official role. We were all fighting.

Chapter 3: Reading the Frontline Seasons

Rob Lee [4:09]

Can you tell us about the current situation?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [4:11]

A technological war where the number of personnel at positions has decreased significantly and the amount of equipment has increased. This means UAVs, ground robotic systems. The war now is fought more from cover. Nobody runs openly across fields anymore or moves in the open — everything is concealed, with more emphasis on technological development.

Rob Lee [4:38]

What about in this particular part of the frontline? What's the current situation and how has it changed as the seasons change, it's becoming summer.

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [4:45]

Winter and autumn are always the best weather for us in terms of destroying the enemy. Since we are on defense, the enemy is always moving, and his movement in conditions where there is no foliage — when the ground is cold and we can see him through thermal imaging from drones — it's easier to find and kill him. This is an increase in the number of dead Russians. Now summer has come with all its foliage. I can still detect the enemy. I work on strikes, but because of the density of leaves and branches, I can't always observe the destruction or confirm the enemy has been eliminated. There are difficulties in detecting him. If before we could see movement at five to ten kilometers at once, now we need to increase the range of reconnaissance and increase the number of drones per square meter to see an enemy infantryman in this summer foliage. Fog can come in winter too, depending on the temperature, but the work always continues. Fiber optic drones allow low-altitude flight even in fog, to set ambushes and detect and strike the enemy.

Rob Lee [6:03]

Has the intensity of the fighting increased now the weather has changed?

Chapter 4: Russia's Infiltration Tactics

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [6:07]

Usually the intensity of fighting increases in spring, but given that the enemy has been conducting a very long period of offensive operations, he is now running out of steam. There is activity. He is trying to infiltrate, trying to push, but not with the same intensity as last year. The amount of equipment is already less, the number of personnel is less — they're being pushed hard — but this quantity is controlled by our means, not what it was last year. I can speak for my own direction in which I worked: it has decreased by about sixty percent, in my assessment.

Rob Lee [6:46]

Are tactics still primarily infiltration tactics? And maybe you can speak about how Russia uses drones and what their tactics of employment are with drones.

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [6:53]

The conditions for infiltration tactics are the same: small infantry groups infiltrate and try to establish a foothold. It doesn't work. Next group, next group. And so they keep pounding until they manage to secure themselves in an area. The problem is that they have more manpower — more "meat" — than we have living people whom we worry about and try to keep alive. That's why they manage to advance a little. I would say the 38th Brigade is always in the hottest directions — not just Myrnohrad and Pokrovsk. That's why it's one of the most renowned brigades. Yes, we have always stood at the forefront. When in 2024 we took up a defensive position in the Myrnohrad area, we remained in one of the hottest directions, holding the line. When we entered the direction in 2024, within two months the enemy's losses there were up to two thousand personnel, and the units that were standing were ground down to zero. We moved in actively, held the defense, and for roughly a year and a half they tried to push through. The only thing is — the infantry held, but the concrete didn't, because the number of KABs per square meter, the FABs that were collapsing nine-story buildings in a single strike — unfortunately, it was very hard to hold.

Chapter 5: Confronting the Rubicon Unit

Rob Lee [8:18]

Is Rubicon operating here? And how would you describe their tactics?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [8:22]

Yes, we encountered Rubicon last year, somewhere at the beginning of summer. A powerful unit that we had to deal with. Trained pilots who approached this systematically. They had been preparing for a long time to build this organism. There is difficulty in working against them, because it's not simply a monkey who picked up a drone and flew. There are already trained specialists who train others. They enter an area and train the unit that is in that area. They explain how to do it. In this way, they are not only doing their own work — they are also teaching others, which creates more problems along the front, as units that previously couldn't do anything begin to develop. They serve as a training base and have built their operations in a systematic, echeloned manner. The

fight against them is ongoing. Their activity has now decreased. As far as I know, the UAV Forces are also working on destroying Rubicon.

Rob Lee [9:29]

So Russia is forming an unmanned systems forces branch, and they're trying to scale that quite significantly this year to be double in size. Have you noticed any change in the increase of the number of drone teams, use of FPVs, other UAVs this year so far?

Chapter 6: Russia's Unmanned Systems Branch

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [9:44]

As for the creation of unmanned systems, I understand that Rubicon is the beginning of their unmanned systems forces. There is definitely improvement in their work. In any case, this is already the fifth year of the war. Even a monkey can be taught to shoot if you want it to. They are developing. The difference is that where before there were chaotic flights and chaotic strikes, now they have shifted to echeloned UAV employment by direction. Accordingly, there are interceptors, ambushers, mine-layers, strikers, spotters — different echelons, different units responsible for different tasks in the attack zone.

Rob Lee [10:31]

When Starlink was cut off at the end of January, early February, it appeared to have a quite significant effect on the forces. We know they're using them on Molniya and other systems. What effect has happened on the war since Russia lost access to Starlink?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [10:44]

For the depth of the middle strike, of course, things have gotten better. They no longer fly in and can't see the same quality picture as when they were using Starlink. There are certain communication problems, but the alternative connection they have, they are developing and improving it. They still cannot switch to drones en masse with this connection. So here we have now seized the initiative and are working on their logistics more actively and effectively. There is definitely improvement. It's just a matter of time before the Russians create their own alternative — if they do.

Rob Lee [11:21]

So we've seen recently that Ukraine has a successful middle strike campaign occurring. It's been going for a few months now. Can you see any effect on the front line in terms of the fuel, FPVs, the ammunition, infantry, that it's becoming more difficult for Russia to fight the war on the front line because of this middle strike campaign?

Chapter 7: When Starlink Went Dark

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [11:40]

So far we have not seen any significant changes. We understand that this is a long-term perspective. We have only just begun cutting their logistics through middle strikes. Accordingly, over time, if this continues and for however long it continues, there will be improvement. For now, they still have reserves that are sustaining their offensive operations. When those reserves run out and there is no resupply, then there may be improvement. We have not yet felt anything significant. Stakharovo is already a deep strike. They are pulling from occupied territories, from Luhansk, Donetsk, bringing it here to the front. They have resources near the front, personnel that they are pulling up to the line. We are cutting that now. This creates problems with logistics, with supplying the front line. But when their reserves run out and they can no longer supply the front line,

then there will be improvement. The whole point of deep strike, middle strike, and close-range engagement is to have as few enemies as possible reach our positions. It all works systematically. Their command posts are struck, their personnel deployment areas are struck through deep strike and middle strike, their movement, transportation of fuel, ammunition, and personnel to the frontline areas and the zone of combat contact — and then the infantryman who has to reach a given position is eliminated by close-range engagement. Right now all these components — the first component, close-range engagement, was working constantly and effectively, but because of the number of enemies reaching our positions, we couldn't always eliminate all of them in time. Now with the components of middle strike and deep strike, with these strikes and their intensification, the time will come when the enemy will be forced to move to negotiations, to a defensive battle, to stopping along the line of contact, because he simply won't be able to bring personnel up to our positions.

Rob Lee [13:43]

Your brigade was fighting in Myropil for a long time. Can you talk about the difference between urban warfare and fighting out in the tree lines in terms of drone employment?

Chapter 8: The Three-Layer Strike Doctrine

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [13:51]

We can talk about that. When we were defending Myrnohrad, we also had positions in field areas, in tree lines. The one advantage was that we had nine-story buildings that gave us additional armor. Our pilots, our hubs were better protected, under better cover. This allowed us to hold positions in the tree lines before Myrnohrad for longer, supporting the infantry until the enemy finally decided on the main direction and began applying all the KABs, all the FABs against those apartment buildings. When fifty KABs and FABs hit per day, it becomes very hard to hold the defense. In the field, depending on weather conditions — when it's autumn and winter, as I said — it's equally difficult to quietly bring personnel up to positions, rotate them, deliver supplies, and ensure the supply of FPV drones for strikes in the tree lines. But the enemy moving toward us along the same route is also detected in advance — they have difficulties too. Here it becomes more a question of who can sustain positions with ammunition and supplies for longer, maintain those positions in field conditions, and reach and strike the enemy. If we have properly dug defensive lines behind us, from which we can reach the enemy, their crews, their infantry as it moves — while the enemy cannot reach our UAV systems and strike them — then we will have the priority. It all depends on who has the better distribution. In urban areas there are more shelters, more places to hide, to set ambushes, to meet the enemy — it's harder for him to detect us. In the field, in a tree line, you can't hide much and positions are found very quickly; it's easier for the enemy to pass through. So for infantry, urban is much better.

Rob Lee [16:15]

For fiber optic FPVs, what percentage of FPVs you use are fiber optic cable or not? And how much would you estimate on their side it is too?

Chapter 9: Cutting Russian Logistics Deep

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [16:24]

It's all situational. Fiber optic is not a panacea — we don't fly only on it, because there are certain moments when it breaks, when there are distances you can't reach on optic, and it's harder to deliver to positions. It all depends on how our positions are set up, the logistics to those positions, the supply of fiber optic cable, because the kill zone is increasing. Delivering large quantities of fiber optic to the front positions so it can fly further is not feasible, so we pull back. If you pull back and run optics there, you need a larger spool, more cable, which increases the size of the drone — and the farther the flight on optics, the greater the risks: artillery could hit, some animal could run across and break the cable, a neighbor or an enemy could sever it, some bird — the sky is saturated with drones, even another drone could break the optic — and all of this together reduces the hit percentage of fiber optic drones. But situationally, for certain tasks, we use it. Currently we use about forty percent fiber optic drones, but we are also improving our technical capabilities and developing radio drones, so we don't hold on exclusively to optics — prices on fiber optic cable have risen. Russia is friends with China. China raised prices, transferred factories to Russia, restricted supply, and that's it — there's nothing we can do. So optics has now become more of a situational tool for more precise strikes or certain ambushes. When possible, it's better to work on radio. On the

Russian side — depending on their positions — if last year they were using maybe fifty to sixty percent fiber optic drones because they were using them actively for ambushes, they had no obstacles along their routes, they had priority heights, better positions, and they worked effectively purely on optics — now it's fifty-fifty. They can't always fly with optics. There are breaks, we shoot them down. So fifty-fifty: fifty optics, fifty radio. It could all fade away — it's all about price. If it gets more expensive, there will be much better alternative means. For example, Starlinks — if installed on a drone, the price would be cheaper. Install Starlink on a drone, fly, and you're not limited in range, no risk of fiber optic breaking, any kind of interruption. And maybe then we can move away from it.

Chapter 10: Defending Urban Versus Field Positions

Rob Lee [19:31]

Are you using Starlink on FPVs? And what about for the heavy bomber drones?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [19:35]

We use Starlinks on bombers for delivery — we use them. It improves certain things, but we need to understand — as I said about optics — that there will be cheaper alternatives. It could be Starlink, but not necessarily. There's a problem with Starlink in that it can also be jammed, satellites can be suppressed, there can be connection drops, loss of control, and other issues. And this means we need to understand that warfare must be situational — tools for specific situations. If in our direction the enemy is actively jamming satellites, suppressing Starlinks, and this Starlink starts giving errors and becomes uncontrollable, there must be alternatives that will work in that zone. If there's an area where there is no such jamming and Starlink works effectively, they will work there. We are not yet using it on FPVs. There are UAV Forces that work with Starlinks — they use middle-strike drones there, which I don't know the details of yet.

Chapter 11: Fiber Optic Is Not Panacea

Rob Lee [20:49]

What would you say the accuracy is for radio signal FPVs, fiber optic FPVs, and how many FPVs do you typically use per day?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [20:56]

That's also a question. It depends on what targets you're working against — we model the situation. I'm working against enemy artillery at distances up to thirty kilometers. Accordingly, flying a fiber optic drone thirty kilometers to an enemy artillery piece can be a problem. I need to use, say, twenty drones. Of those twenty drones, five have fiber optic breaks while flying to the gun — artillery strikes, something ran across, cut it. Five breaks. Then, say, five more optic breaks or shot-down drones near the target. The enemy isn't stupid either. He understands that optics means a drone — you've seen, it's bulky. There are echeloned groups at the approaches to their positions, where at certain sections they shoot down all drones flying. To reach and break through to that artillery piece, you need to build a route — and near the gun there are those who shoot down drones. So on the approach to the gun you may lose another five drones, and going straight in to hit the gun takes skill from the operator and nerve under fire. Eight drones can hit targets, reach the artillery. So we see: out of twenty drones, eight hit. Less than fifty percent. If these are close-range targets where I use optics at fifteen kilometers and the drone is much smaller, more mobile, and fifteen kilometers is easier to cover with fewer breaks, then there can be seventy percent hits. So everything — hit percentage for fiber optic drones — depends on the targets and the range of the spool. For radio — in principle, radio has always been fifty-fifty because of the enemy's active EW. Their electronic warfare is generally their strong suit. They have always had powerful development of countermeasures, and accordingly, drones are very actively jammed. It's constant technological development on our side and theirs, where we hop frequencies or controls so the enemy can't jam us. The enemy tries to hop to suppress us, and accordingly — which drones will work on which frequencies. Generally it's fifty-fifty. But again, the closer the enemy is to us, the shorter the distance we need to cover, the better our signal. The farther to the enemy, the worse the signal, because their EW is already there. We can't position an FPV pilot close to the enemy because of logistics, the kill zone, all those factors. So forty to fifty FPVs are used per day — and that's for one position. You need to understand that you must deliver a certain number of drones there so they are on-site and stored together with ammunition, prepared for strikes. And so there are certain echelons, certain problems. Let's say fifty percent radio and thirty to forty percent optic — but depending on targets.

Chapter 12: Choosing Radio Over Cable

Rob Lee [24:11]

I've heard that the quality of the fiber optic cables that are being procured now are lower quality and they're breaking more often. Is that becoming a problem?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [24:19]

So far we haven't encountered that. We source fiber optic from a verified manufacturer. We haven't yet seen a critical deterioration in quality. There have always been some

problems with optics. It's a general problem in Ukraine — we have no standardized solution, one unified system that will work. On one hand yes, but on the other hand, maybe that's not worse, because there is competition and monopoly decreases. Different manufacturers are trying to improve and competing with each other for who has the better product. But through this big kitchen come different drones — some with poor optics, some with better. But we try to source just one thing that suits us and that we work with.

Chapter 13: Starlink on the Bombers

Rob Lee [25:08]

So the Russians have taken much of Myrnohrad, Pokrovsk, and Rudynsk to this point, and now they have some tall buildings. Has that made it more difficult fighting them because they can put antennas on top of tall buildings?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [25:20]

There is a problem with the density of drones flying into the depth of our forces. The issue is that we see the enemy working from tall buildings — they can even work from windows, not just basements. The problem is that if the enemy could see us like that, they would send a KAB or FAB and level those buildings. When we see them — unfortunately, we don't have that many KABs and FABs — and we have to work precisely: prepare FPVs, set ambushes, wait for the pilot to come out, deploy the drone, strike them, fly into those windows, work against enemy antennas, suppress the enemy to the maximum so they cannot employ all their means. In this zone the UAV Forces also work — Alpha Complex. This is a comprehensive approach by all units standing in the zone, because we understand the danger — if we let the enemy work calmly from those heights, life will be impossible for us. As it is, there are already difficulties in logistics because of strikes by enemy FPVs, but for now we're controlling the enemy.

Rob Lee [26:37]

Can you talk a little about the logistics? We know that much logistics for units is moved by UGVs and by heavy bomber drones. Can you talk about how you maintain logistics and how much of logistics for the brigade is moved through your battalion itself?

Chapter 14: Counting FPV Accuracy Rates

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [26:52]

Logistics is a comprehensive approach. It is also echeloned, divided into certain echelons. I won't explain in detail, but there are near logistics, medium, and long-range means. Near logistics — we have UGV means that deliver to points, to certain positions we can reach. Routes that are controlled, which we can escort with a serviceman to shoot down FPVs. There is medium range, where the UGV is unlikely to reach — either the distance is too great or the terrain doesn't allow it. There are bombers that deliver. UGVs can bring supplies to bombers, and then those supplies are sent via bomber. And there is long-range. Long-range is when the enemy has very dense coverage of the sky with their FPV interceptors — an enemy who can shoot along the route — so long-range logistics is provided by FPV means, i.e., FPV one-way. This is the most expensive, but the life and supply of personnel is always the priority. From what we see on their side, logistics is mostly via FPV drones. But from intercepts we read, they don't always deliver provisions — they can sit without food. Very rarely does everything get through. When an enemy soldier is captured, he is usually thin and weak. Only freshly arrived ones can be normal. They simply don't value people much. Unfortunately, on our side too there are moments when logistics is complicated, but it's more related to technical means, to the inability to deliver because of the enemy. On their side it's from intercepts. I can play you some later. They simply don't value them as people. We value the life of every person and animal very much — but not the Russians. And the Russians don't spare anyone.

Rob Lee [28:57]

For your heavy bombers, how many do you lose per week, per month? And what percentage of missions are for strike, logistics or for mining?

Chapter 15: The Quality Cable Problem

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [29:07]

[exhales] Look, up to twenty bomber sorties per day can come from my unit — up to twenty sorties for logistics plus additional sorties for strikes. Logistics success rate — let's say: eighty to ninety percent are successful logistics missions per month. For strikes the percentage is lower — around sixty to seventy percent — related to the fact that you can't always hit the target because the working altitude is slightly higher. You're working over an enemy who can shoot at you and shoot you down, and their echeloned FPVs are working there. So we drop and don't always hit — you can repeat the strike or something else. Bomber losses on strikes are naturally higher, because the FPV interceptor uses small arms, the percentage of bomber losses is higher. Right now, maybe twenty-five percent. But this is what I'm saying for my battalion. On average, up to fifteen kilograms payload.

Rob Lee [30:24]

How many UGV missions do you do per day and how often do you lose UGVs?

Chapter 16: Fighting From Tall Buildings

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj [30:29]

Oh [laughs], war is such a situational thing. Again, it all depends on the number of available means. Given that the brigade has been in a hot direction for quite a long time, the number of available means has significantly decreased. What I can employ — we plan trips at certain times of day for long-range, and at certain times for short-range. So in a day I can do five short-range runs, and on another day three long-range runs. It's all situational. A UGV can live very differently — from a month to a single day, depending on randomness, the length of the route, the complexity of the route. We also account for the possibility that there might be a KAB crater on the route, some wire mesh, netting. So the UGV may simply not get there because it got stuck and couldn't be evacuated in time and got hit — because some loitering drone or some FPV spotted it. Let's say: over the last week I lost one UGV. In a week I transported — without lying — up to two hundred kilograms per UGV. Over a week, let's take five trips — say three per day to be honest — at about two hundred kilograms each.

Rob Lee [32:07]

What do you think about the e-point system? Is it effective and how does it affect how you operate?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj [32:13]

E-point?

Rob Lee [32:13]

Yebaly.

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj [32:14]

Ah, yes. On one hand, it's really great, because our brigade last month scored four and a half thousand points. That's about thirty million hryvnias, with which we can buy ourselves the equipment we'll use next month. That's great. The downside is that because of the rating system, units sometimes chase points — and instead of striking the enemy in cover, not everyone flies to that covered position because it won't give them points. You use equipment that costs money, but you won't have the confirmation to get that point, or you'll get fewer points, and everyone is chasing those points. I would simply remove this rating, just calculate the number of points for each unit individually, and everyone would know what they scored for themselves in a month, got that, then bought their equipment and works. There's also the problem of integration, in my view, for underdeveloped units for which it's hard to rack up a certain number of points — they won't receive those funds, and if they're transferred to a hot direction where they need a certain number of means, they don't have enough points or enough means to work there. We have, so to speak, these "digimons" — SBU Alpha — who always take the top spot in the rating and lead that rating. They are a completely different caste, different number of means, number of people, number of targets. They are professionals in their field. I would remove them from the rating table entirely. I would have points awarded by specific task type. This is useful, it's effective, but I would think carefully about the usefulness of the rating system.

Chapter 17: Echeloned Logistics Explained

Rob Lee [34:04]

Could you explain what the structure of a UAV battalion is? And does this make sense for other militaries to adopt a similar structure?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [34:11]

Let's put it this way. Our battalion was an experimental project. First we created it as a consolidated battalion. It showed its effectiveness. Then it was officially introduced into the staffing structure. We defined the structure as divided into five main directions: wings, bombers, FPV, close reconnaissance, and UGVs. [coughs] This gave us the ability to manage means by direction, and the unit commanders responsible for each direction study the topic more deeply. Based on our unit, I know that similar structures were created in other Marine Corps brigades, which shows the effectiveness. Something like that.

Rob Lee [35:01]

Last question. What should foreign militaries learn about this war, about drone warfare from you, and what recommendations do you have for other militaries?

Chapter 18: Inside the Point System

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [35:10]

The main recommendation is to move away from bureaucracy, to simplify certain processes of operational use of troops and equipment on the battlefield. It's like in books, in history — we saw how Napoleon thought outside the box. It's situational. War is a situation. Every situation, every direction, every sector must be adapted to its own situation — what means, what technologies, and so on. I cannot advise you to use what works for us. No — every army must have its own critical thinking, its own officer corps, staff corps, which must not simply take our approach as a model, but must understand that in an emergency situation it needs to quickly adapt to the course of military operations and make its own decisions about what will be effective for them at that time, in that direction. To advise: "Everything works for us" — yes, as a template you can take our UAV means: near, medium, and long-range. But questions of funding, equipment, technological development, specialized personnel — in another army something may be better, something else may fit. In our situation, fighting against a larger, better-funded army, we arrived at cheaper strike solutions that inflict more damage on the enemy. So we adapted — we arrived at this. Therefore, the main thing I wish for: reduce bureaucracy, simplify certain processes for faster response, adapt to the situation, and think critically. Especially — select good, motivated personnel who will react quickly to the situation, rather than old officers who are already outdated and see nothing beyond history, the way someone once did something. [sighs] I hope I answered your question. [laughs]

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovsty [continued]

I have an additional question for you, if you don't mind. There's now a narrative building in Russia about mobilization. Not a full one, of course, but something like the 2023 partial mobilization — grabbing an additional three hundred thousand out of thin air within a

year and repeating that move. Your impression, your thoughts on this approach. Here and now, when there is such a line — we are trying to increase our capabilities for mid-strikes. What will be the result of such a move? Will it be effective?

This is not the first time they've mobilized. They can carry out mobilization; they can again push through casualties per square meter of territory they'll capture. Yes, we can lose certain territories, but how many people are they ready to spend on this?

Objectively, the control of enemy manpower has now increased — the number of dead enemies has increased. This is what Minister of Defense Fedorov said — fifty thousand per month. The fact that the number of means has increased means we're trying to kill more of the enemy who is stepping onto our land. They can mobilize. However many they mobilize, that's their calculation for how many meters of ground they can squeeze out. Yes, it hurts us. We don't want this. What we want is: okay, let's stop along the line of contact, negotiations, and then figure something out from there. Because I care very much about my people. I believe I have the best specialists — they work — and every loss of my serviceman is a very painful process. I'm ready to fight, to not let them onto our land, but it would be better to stop, make a deal, and then communicate through political means from our territory. But if they dare — okay, let's go. I always fight for justice, so we will fight.

Rob Lee

Is Molniya still a big issue?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

It's a problem, but we have built up our countermeasures against Molniya. Our interceptors are working, and plus — the old ones that we blocked are no longer such a threat — though it's still noticeable.

Rob Lee

How many Molniya FPVs does a brigade face per day?

Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

[exhales] I won't tell you the total number because that's more for the EW service that tracks it. What I've heard — in our direction, they record two hundred to three hundred FPVs, half are suppressed, half are active, and of those half are striking targets. As for my guys, you can feel the FPV work. This is what I've heard, but I won't say that's exactly how it is. Maybe it was one of the intense days. That's not my question — I don't track the number of enemy FPVs.

Rob Lee

Okay, great. Thanks so much. Really appreciate it.

Chapter 19-20: Outro & Sponsor Reads

Samuel P.N. Cook [41:39]

So thank you for listening to this episode of the Ukraine Military History Podcast. I promised you at the beginning that I'd tell you more about our sponsors. Our mission at the Borderlands Foundation — founded right after the war started in 2022 — is to make sure that Ukraine's heroes are never forgotten. To get in touch with us, just go to theborderlandsgroup.com. Fill out our Contact Us form. Thank you for watching the sponsor reads here. It's important to me that we provide value to you in every podcast episode, and these are the ways that you can support us so we can continue to afford to produce and expand and increase the frequency of our content production for the benefit of Ukraine and its allies.

QUOTE HIGHLIGHTS

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The heroes of Ukraine, whether Ukrainians or foreigners fighting side by side, are writing this history. And those memories have costs.

— Samuel P.N. Cook, Founder

||

We are dedicated to helping soldiers and veterans overcome the post-traumatic stress and mental health challenges that arise from their service.

— Samuel P.N. Cook, Founder

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Mavic 2 and Mavic 3 drones began to show their effectiveness, and that is when we started ramping up our efforts.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

||

We started with just one or two people. We put drone operations on a system, cooperated, created our own mini-unit, and began to expand it.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

||

I was in the battalion administration, but I was performing tasks far outside my official role. We were all fighting.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

||

A technological war where the number of personnel has decreased significantly and equipment numbers have increased. The war is now fought more from cover.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

||

Winter and autumn are the best weather for us. When there are no leaves and the ground is cold, we can see the enemy through drone thermal cameras — he's easier to find.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj

||

Fiber optic drones allow low-altitude flight even in fog, to set ambushes and detect the enemy.

— Vladyslav "Shram" Tovstyj