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Ukraine to seek extradition of alleged Russian mercenaries detained in Belarus

by Mark Raczkiewicz

More than a half a dozen of the 33 alleged Russian mercenaries apprehended in Belarus on July 29 took part in fighting on the Russian side of the ongoing, bloody war in eastern Ukraine.

After a hastily organized national security meeting the same day, the Belarusian national security chief, Andrey Rakou, told reporters that at least 14 alleged members of the Kremlin-linked Wagner private military contractor had either fought or served in some capacity in the Donbas, where a war has raged for six years between Ukrainian forces and combatants supplied by and under the command and control of Russia, killing more than 13,200 people and displacing nearly 1.5 million more.

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) the following day told BBC Ukraine that it would seek extradition of the combatants who fought against Kyiv. Acting Ukrainian Ambassador to Belarus Petro Vrublevskyy said on Facebook that he was summoned by the host country's Foreign Affairs Ministry to provide information on the detained alleged mercenaries, including any crimes they may have committed in Ukraine.

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka said at the urgent national security meeting that the mercenaries were preparing "terrorist acts" ahead of the August 9 presidential election, while accusing Moscow of deploying them.

"I am already seeing reaction by the Russians. They are already making excuses, saying things like we invited them here ourselves," Mr. Lukashenka said. "It is obvious: justifications must be made for dirty intentions."

The Kremlin denied any unlawful actions.

Russia "does not know anything" about why the group of 33 Russian nationals had been detained in Belarus, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, as cited by German state broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

"Insinuations have appeared that some organizations from Russia are sending someone [to Belarus]," Mr. Peskov told reporters on July 30. "This is nothing but insinuations."

Private military contractors are illegal in Russia, and Moscow doesn't acknowledge their existence.

Thirty-two of the alleged soldiers of fortune first stayed at a Minsk hotel on July 25-26 before moving to a spa resort outside the Belarusian capital, where they were apprehended unarmed. One more purported mercenary was detained in the south of the country.

Video footage released by state media showed them entering the premises of the spa with duffel bags and three large containers in tow.

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Russian occupying forces violate ceasefire in the Donbas 19 minutes after its start

Full ceasefire went into effect July 27



Presidential Office of Ukraine

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Stanytsia Luhanska checkpoint with the president of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, during a working visit to the Donbas on July 23, four days before a ceasefire went into effect in the region.

by Roman Tymotsko

KYIV – As of 12:01 a.m. on July 27, a full and comprehensive ceasefire went into effect in the area of armed conflict in the Donbas region. The decision was adopted on July 22, at a regular meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia

and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). All parties approved the ceasefire agreement, however, Russian proxies fired upon Ukrainian positions at 12:20 a.m. – 19 minutes after the start of the ceasefire.

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Minneapolis Ukrainian center educates teachers, public about Holodomor

by Walter Anastazievsky

MINNEAPOLIS – For the second consecutive year, the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (CHGS) at the University of Minnesota partnered with the Ukrainian American Community Center (UACC) in Minneapolis to educate teachers and the public about the Holodomor. "This valued partnership provides the UACC with a platform to raise awareness and promote Holodomor recognition," stated Luda Anastazievsky, UACC programming director, who leads the center's outreach and education efforts.

In August 2019, CHGS had invited the Ukrainian center to present at a summer workshop for middle and high school teachers from the Twin Cities and around the country. This week-long educator for educators provided an introduction to the legal and social concepts of genocide, as well as historical and contemporary examples of genocide, including the Holocaust and the genocides in Armenia, Bosnia,



Luda Anastazievsky

At the Holodomor exhibit at St. Constantine Ukrainian Catholic Church in Minneapolis (from left) are: Halyna Chorelec, daughter of a Holodomor survivor; Wanda Bahmet, who survived the Holodomor as a child; and Stefan Iwaskevycz, grandson of a Holodomor survivor.

Cambodia and Ukraine.

UACC member Walter Anastazievsky talked about the legacy of Holodomor, its commemoration within the Ukrainian community and efforts at recognition – information new to most of the attending educators. The Holodomor is not taught in most U.S. schools and is not a part of the social studies curriculum. Unlike several other states, Minnesota has no law mandating genocide education. Teachers expressed appreciation for this learning opportunity and were excited to receive the Holodomor teaching resources prepared by Ms. Anastazievsky to assist them in lesson planning.

Earlier this year, the UACC team collaborated with CHGS to create a Holodomor Resource Guide (<https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/holodomor>) for the Genocide Education Outreach Program to promote the study of the Holodomor

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Walter Anastazievsky presents at the 2019 workshop of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.



Children of the Ukrainian American Youth Association light candles at the Ukrainian American Community Center to commemorate the victims of the Holodomor.

Minneapolis...

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among teachers. Valentina Kuryliw, director of education, and Sophia Isajiw, research associate, from the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium (HREC) at the University of Alberta assisted the UACC team in this work. Besides being a great educational resource for teachers, students and the general public, the Holodomor Guide amplifies the Ukrainian community's voice on a national and international level.

The Ukrainian American Community Center welcomed the opportunity to participate in an online community dialogue on the Holodomor Genocide of 1932-1933, presented on June 30. The program was part of the CHGS series "Bridges of Memory - Connecting Communities and Classrooms," designed to provide educators and the broader public an opportunity to learn about genocides from the experiences and perspectives of local survivors and survivor communities. Topics included the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide and the Holodomor. The series was presented virtually, and each program can be viewed on the CHGS YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CHGSumn/videos>.

The director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Prof. Alejandro Baer, welcomed the attendees of the virtual event and introduced Nika Sremac, a CHGS scholar, and two guests from the local Twin Cities Ukrainian community: Ms. Anastazievsky,

UACC programming director, and Stefan Iwaszkewycz, grandson of a Holodomor survivor and a long-standing Ukrainian community activist. Ms. Anastazievsky and Mr. Iwaszkewycz highlighted the history of the Ukrainian community in Minnesota, and provided important historical background on the Holodomor, its mass trauma, collective memory, struggle against denial and recognition.

They also shared the ways Ukrainian community in Minnesota preserves and celebrates its culture, and educates younger generations. The "Bridges of Memory" event was a wonderful opportunity for the UACC to contribute to teacher and community education. Since the event was videotaped, teachers would be able to use the recorded video as a resource for teaching the Holodomor.

At the event, both presenters spoke of their personal experiences - Mr. Iwaszkewycz about growing up as the grandson of a Holodomor survivor; and Ms. Anastazievsky about the experience of growing up in Soviet Ukraine, under the official shroud of silence and denial about the Holodomor, and the Soviet suppression of Ukrainian language, culture, history and identity.

In his recollections, Mr. Iwaszkewycz related: "My Baba [grandma] was from Poltava region, one of the hardest hit during the Holodomor, but... she didn't like to or want to recall those memories... she was always very reticent." As a participant of the recently completed Holodomor Oral History Project, the speaker shared his recollections in a recorded interview along with over a dozen Holodomor survivors and their descendants in the Minnesota

Ukrainian community.

When asked about the importance of raising awareness of the Holodomor, Mr. Iwaszkewycz brought the audience's attention to the contribution of the late Slavko Nowytski, a trailblazing film director and well-known Minnesota Ukrainian. Nowytski created the acclaimed documentary about the Holodomor "Harvest of Despair," which raised global awareness about Joseph Stalin's crimes against Ukrainians. Mr. Iwaszkewycz emphasized: "Young people need the opportunity to be exposed to historical events, and this documentary would do just that."

Mr. Iwaszkewycz explained that by raising awareness about the Holodomor, Ukrainians also raise awareness of the current situation in Ukraine and in the world. He pointed out that today, just as in the time of the Holodomor, Russia's government continues its colonial policy and uses the tools of disinformation, denial and obfuscation as weapons in the hybrid war against Ukraine, which once again is forced to defend its independence and territorial integrity.

Ms. Anastazievsky spoke about a commemorative event that took place in November 2019 when the UACC worked closely with Larysa Gerasko, Ukraine's consul general in Chicago at that time, to bring to Minnesota a Holodomor traveling exhibit developed by the National Ukrainian Museum in Chicago. During the month of November, when Ukrainians commemorate the Holodomor, the exhibit was displayed at the three local Ukrainian churches, the UACC, and at a K-8 school.

When Ms. Anastazievsky, an educator in

Minneapolis public schools, brought the Holodomor exhibit to her school, it was attended by many staff members and students. She also created a Holodomor lesson plan for her school's social studies teacher to be taught to middle school students. It was the teachers' and students' first exposure to the tragedy of the Holodomor. "I'm learning about the genocide of Ukrainians along with my students, and it's a great experience for them to see a teacher as a learner," shared the social studies educator.

Speaking about the significance of Holodomor commemoration in the Minnesota Ukrainian community, Ms. Anastazievsky said, "By commemorating the Holodomor we are fighting the denial and stating to the world that we, Ukrainians, have distinct history and culture. It's an act of preservation of our culture and our identity."

At the end of community dialogue on the Holodomor Genocide of 1932-1933, Mr. Iwaszkewycz brought educators' attention to the new film about the Holodomor "Mr. Jones" by the Golden Globe-winning writer/director Agnieszka Holland and screenwriter Andrea Chalupa. Ms. Anastazievsky recommended the Holodomor lesson book titled "Holodomor in Ukraine, the Genocidal Famine 1932-1933" by Ms. Kuryliw.

"The UACC is honored to continue its partnership with the Center for the Holocaust and Genocide Studies and is already planning a Holodomor commemoration event in November. Educating teachers and the public on how the Holodomor came about, and how prejudice and the will to dominate and control a particular ethnic group led to the misuse of power, mass oppression and genocide, is part of UACC's mission," emphasized Ms. Anastazievsky.



Parishioners and guests visit the Holodomor Exhibit at St. Katherine Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Arden Hills, Minn.

Crimean Anschluss...

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notion that other Russian cities larger than Sevastopol could aspire to a similar status.

Those two innovations, along with Mr. Putin's push for the establishment of "federal territories" to be run directly from Moscow, have the potential to disorder the entire system of federal arrangements that

the Russian Federation inherited from the Soviet Union, at the very least provoking debate and more likely in the current climate creating demands.

To prevent that from leading to what the Baltic and union republic experiences did in 1991, Mr. Putin has thus become obsessive about punishing anyone who talks about any revision of federal arrangements. He clearly recognizes that could tear the country apart even though he bears full

responsibility for creating this situation.

"And although Russian society so far has avoided a wide discussion of these issues," the Perm scholar says, "for the Kremlin they are real questions of political survival." And its new laws punishing any questioning of the country's borders are its attempt at creating "a defense mechanism," although in fact, such laws have the opposite effect, calling attention to the problem and its seriousness.

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