

# Crimean issue: SBI blames those who are unlikely to be punished

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The State Bureau of Investigations (SBI) of Ukraine has completed an investigation into the former: President V. Yanukovych, Chief of the General Staff V. Zamana, Defense Ministers D. Salamatin and P. Lebedev. The abovementioned persons are accused of undermining the defense capability, sovereignty, territorial integrity and untouchability of Ukraine while in power in 2012-2014, which led to the actual loss of the Crimean peninsula.

According to the conclusions of the investigation (<https://dbr.gov.ua/news/yak-ukraina-vtratila-krim-versiya-slidstva-derzhavnogo-byuro-rozsliduvan>), the annexation of Crimea began long before the actual transfer of the peninsula under Russian control.

SBI investigators have identified five main episodes of the crime:

1. Reduction of the number of the Armed Forces of Ukraine from 240 to 162 thousand persons in 2012-2013. According to the concept of former President Yanukovych, by the end of 2014 the number of the Armed Forces was to be reduced to 157 thousand people, of which 119 thousand are military personnel.

The investigation is confident that "since the state leadership at that time elected a non-aligned status, it was necessary, on the contrary, to build up its own military presence in the country. The reduction would be justified if the state was directed towards collective security, when in the event of aggression against one of the allied countries, other countries would mobilize their troops to repel it. Under

such conditions, there is no need for states to keep a large army”.

Chief of the General Staff Vladimir Zamana and Defense Ministers Dmitry Salamatin and Pavel Lebedev, who initiated these reforms, were found guilty under this charge.

The number of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was also reduced at the expense of combat units. Hundreds of thousands of 152 caliber ammunition from the Grad, Uragan, and Smerch rocket systems and mortar fire artillery systems were fired under the guise of disposal. This led to significant wear and tear of artillery weapons. The command justified its actions by reducing the load on the warehouses. The investigation believes that the reduction of artillery groups in military units led to a decrease in the combat capability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

2. Undermining the mobilization readiness of the Armed Forces. On the initiative of the Chief of the General Staff Zamana in 2012-2013 the mobilization system was reformed. There were reductions and mergers of district and regional military registration and enlistment offices, as well as centers for admission to contract service. The number of military registration and enlistment offices was halved. As a result, military units were only 25-55% complete.

The investigation believes that one of the results of the reform was the inability in 2014 of military commissariats to fulfill their tasks and organize territorial defense in areas of responsibility.

3. Destruction of the Crimea air defense system. The control of the peninsula's air defense system was transferred to the Ukrainian Navy, which in 2014 went over to the side of Russia. One from two S-300 brigades was cut. Also, the programs for the modernization of the S-125 and S-200 air defense systems were stopped.

The investigation blames Vladimir Zamana for initiating the disbandment of the Air Force as a type of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which led to the lack of the necessary air defense for Ukraine and created conditions for the subversive activities of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

As a result of the lack of command and chaos in the troops at the initial stage of the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula in February 2014, about 10 Russian Il-76 transport aircraft crossed the Ukrainian border without fail.

The response was the raising into the air of the duty fighter SU-27. But by the time of it's arrival in Crimea, Russian planes had already departed and landed at the airfield of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

The anti-aircraft missile troops on duty were also not involved due to the inconsistency of control.

4. Carrying out organizational changes that contradict the legislation of Ukraine. The reforms carried out in the Armed Forces as of December 1, 2013 did not meet the requirements of more than 50 laws and other normative legal acts of Ukraine. The changes made were not reflected in the country's strategic defense documents.

According to the investigation, this led to the loss of command and control and prevented the Armed Forces from forming a strike group and protecting the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

5. Failure to take measures to respond to external threats. The leadership ignored the intelligence information about Russia's preparation for a great offensive operation. As a result, at the end of 2013 – beginning of 2014, the deadlines were missed for carrying out retaliatory defensive measures (mobilization, bringing the Armed Forces of Ukraine to increased combat readiness, conducting exercises in Crimea).

The General Staff possessed intelligence information that

Russia had put the troops of the Western, Southern and other military districts of the RF Armed Forces on alert under the pretext of the need to combat terrorist threats before the Olympic Games in Sochi. Units of the Russian Black Sea Fleet were involved in the events. There was also information about the creation of a combat tactical group from the 810th Marine Brigade. At the same time, as reconnaissance planes of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, they repeatedly violated the airspace of Ukraine over Crimea.

The investigation believes that the consequence of all of the above actions was “a significant decrease in the level of combat capability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the inability of the army to fulfill constitutional tasks for the defense of Ukraine, protection of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability, which in turn created conditions for the military occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol 21 March 2014, and also contributed to the military occupation of part of the territories of Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine.

On all these points, the above persons are accused of treason (part 1 of article 111 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine). In case of proof of guilt, the suspects face imprisonment for a term of 12 to 15 years with confiscation of property. Only the guilty are unlikely to be really punished. The process is likely to be ostentatious and is intended to distract people's attention from current problems: coronavirus, Ukraine's external debt, growth in utilities, etc.

Authorship: Timoschuk

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