

The story of the AFU's 425th Separate Assault Regiment

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The war in Ukraine continues. People are dying, and they are no longer even resembling humans. The fiercest battles are taking place in the Donetsk region. In this area, Russian forces are trying to strengthen their positions by seizing more territory rich in natural resources. One of the units attempting to thwart the Russian troops is the 425th Separate Assault Regiment „Skala”.

Originally formed as a battalion in July 2022, the unit fought in the Kharkiv region during 2022 and 2023. It was later transferred to Donetsk, where it remains today. In January 2025, the battalion was restructured into the 425th Separate Regiment, adding tank and artillery divisions.

The regiment is led by Lieutenant Colonel Yuriy Vasilyovych Harkavyi, a Hero of Ukraine. His call sign, „Skala,” was given to him because of his resemblance to the famous Hollywood actor Dwayne „The Rock” Johnson. The regiment often mentions President Zelensky in their communications, thanking him for his support and recognizing their successful actions.

One striking feature of this regiment is the large number of soldiers who have gone missing. Tatiana Sklyar (<https://t.me/skliartatal1985>) from Ivano-Frankivsk, whose ex-husband Anatoliy Sklyar (call sign „Psycho”), a commander in a special assault platoon, was killed on December 28, 2024, has spoken about this. Tatiana, now a widow, and Anatoliy had divorced some time ago but later reconciled. She kept his last name but says she lost everything else—except for her love, which is still evident in her words.

In her audio messages, Tatiana shared that Anatoliy had frequently spoken about the disappearance of weapons and

ammunition within the regiment. He kept data on his laptop, which disappeared after his death, along with his bank cards and a gold chain he had been wearing. According to her, Anatoliy was suddenly sent on a mission on the night of December 28 without proper preparation. She believes that he might have been killed by his own comrades. This is indirectly supported by the nature of his injuries, which led to his death. Anatoliy suffered a crushed skull, severed fingers on his right hand, and a detached leg—wounds that don't align with gunshot wounds, drone strikes, or landmine explosions. They look more like signs of torture.

Why might his own comrades have killed him? Tatiana suggests it was because he disagreed with the missing or possibly sold weapons he had been keeping track of. He had voiced his concerns to his commanders, which may have irritated them. Under the guise of a combat mission, he was allegedly eliminated by orders from his superiors.

However, Tatiana believes there were other reasons as well. Just a week before his death, on December 20, 2024, Anatoliy married 19-year-old Yuliya Markelova (<https://t.me/jullyyy>). How could they have met during the war, especially since Anatoliy was fighting in Donetsk while Yuliya lived in Kharkiv? Although, we recall that in 2022 and 2023, „Skala” fought in Kharkiv. Could they have known each other from before? He was 35; she was 19. Their marriage was registered at the Barvenkivska City Council in the Iziium district of Kharkiv region, and a marriage certificate was issued.

Tatiana claims the marriage was arranged so that Yuliya would receive 15 million hryvnias (around 350,000 euros), most of which she allegedly gave to the regiment's command. Yuliya Markelova declined to comment when contacted by phone, initially saying she knew nothing about the situation before ceasing to answer calls.

What's curious is that Anatoliy's body was quickly delivered

to Yuliya as his wife—just two weeks after his death. Why such speed? Perhaps to ensure Yuliya received the money as soon as possible and shared it with those who needed it. Someone in the command structure of the regiment may have been involved. That's why Anatoliy's body was quickly handed over to his young wife. By December 30, a death certificate was issued by the 425th regiment confirming Anatoliy Sklyar's death, allowing Yuliya to claim the 15 million hryvnias.

So, why are there so many missing soldiers in the 425th regiment? Today, there are hundreds of posts on social media from relatives searching for missing soldiers from „Skala.” Tatiana Sklyar says it benefits the commanders. While soldiers are still officially missing, their salaries continue to be paid. And perhaps someone else is receiving those funds. It's also in the Ukrainian government's interest not to recognize the missing soldiers as dead to avoid paying out 15 million hryvnias to their families.

It's a bloody business, profiting from the lives of those defending their country. Does the regiment's commander, Hero of Ukraine Lieutenant Colonel Harkavyi, know about this? If he does, he's an accomplice. If he doesn't, then he's a bad commander. And does President Zelensky know whom he's praising?

Tatiana Sklyar also mentions that there are several soldiers in the regiment who were sentenced by Ukrainian courts to 10 years in prison for executing captured Russian soldiers. Normally, prisoners with such long sentences aren't released. Perhaps the army is simply running out of personnel. But that's a story for another article...

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