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In just under three weeks, Ukrainian-fired prohibited ‘petal’ mines maim at least 44 civilians, kill 2, in Donetsk region

written by Eva Bartlett
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Photo: Eva Bartlett

Ukraine continues to fire internationally-banned anti-personnel mines on civilian areas of Donetsk and other cities in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), in violation of international law and of [the mine ban convention](#) Ukraine signed in 1999 and ratified in 2005.

[Since July 27](#), Ukraine has been firing rockets containing cluster munitions filled with banned PFM-1 "Petal" (or "Butterfly") anti-personnel mines all over Donetsk and surrounding areas. Each rocket contains over 300 of the mines. Already by

August 3, the DPR's Ministry of Emergency Situations [noted that](#) Ukraine had fired several thousand of the prohibited mines on Donetsk.

As of August 15, [44 civilians](#), including two children, have suffered gruesome injuries. Another mine victim [died in hospital](#).

Some days ago, such mines grotesquely [maimed a 15 year old](#) boy in Donetsk.

Younger children don't know that the mines aren't toys, and elderly often simply don't see them, or likewise don't understand the danger, as was the case with [an elderly lady with dementia](#) who, on August 8, lost a foot as a result of stepping on a mine while she was going to work in her garden plot.



Photo: Eva Bartlett

Tiny but powerful, these insidious mines are designed not to kill but to tear off feet or hands. Their design allows them to float to the ground without exploding, where they [easily blend in](#) with most settings and generally lie dormant until stepped on or otherwise disturbed.

According to Konstantin Zhukov, Chief Medical Officer of Donetsk Ambulance Service, a weight of just 2 kg is enough to activate one of the mines. Sometimes, however, they explode spontaneously. An unspoken tragedy on top of the already tragic targeting of civilians is that dogs, cats, birds and other animals are also

victims of these dirty mines.

In the grass, or surprisingly even on sidewalks and streets, it is [very easy to overlook them](#) or mistake them for a leaf. Even when [I've seen such mines marked](#) with warning signs or circled, it still took me quite a bit to actually see them.



Photo: Eva Bartlett]

In its relentless deploying of these mines, Ukraine has targeted all over Donetsk, as well as Makeevka to the east and [Yasinovataya](#) to the north. Ukraine has fired them elsewhere, including the hard-hit northern DPR city of [Gorlovka](#), as well as regions

in the Lugansk People's Republic in previous months.

In fact, [according to](#) DPR authorities, Ukraine began using the mines in March, during battles for Mariupol, and in May was already firing them into DPR settlements. Also in early May, while in Rubizhne in the Lugansk People's Republic, I was warned that Ukraine had been littering nearby areas with the mines, something confirmed by locals when I went to nearby Sievierodonetsk on August 12.

Ukraine turns Donetsk into a minefield



I first saw the Ukrainian-fired mines on July 30, in Kirovskiy, western Donetsk, just days after Ukraine began showering the city with them.

Mine clearance sappers had isolated mines scattered in a field, to detonate after they had destroyed mines in the courtyard of an apartment complex. Amidst the tall grass, wild plants and garden plots, the mines would have been impossible for a non-sapper to spot, and very easy to disturb and lose a foot or hand in doing so.

Although I'd been assured that sappers had cleared the path, I still watched every step I took. And generally for the duration of my time in the DPR, I looked down while walking, watching for mines that could have been moved by wind or rain.

Behind a wall at one end of the apartment complex courtyard, sapper timer-detonated the eight mines they'd found scattered around the playground, lanes and

walkways.



Mine sappers at work. [Source: Photo Courtesy of Eva Bartlett]

That evening, Ukraine fired more rockets with petal mines at Donetsk, this time [targeting the centre of the city](#). People [driving in the streets unknowingly set some off](#).

On a central Donetsk street the next morning, [I saw a grouping of](#) seven mines on a curbside, gathered either by sappers or some courageous local, with warnings to pedestrians and drivers of their presence.

They were so plentiful that marking them however possible was the only way to mitigate the immediate danger of someone randomly stepping or driving over them until they could be neutralized by the sappers.

Even with warning, these nefarious "petal"/"butterfly" mines dropped by Ukraine on Donetsk are hard to see & easy to miss.

Ukraine is committing war crimes against the civilians of the Donbass, and has been for 8+ years. pic.twitter.com/p5byG95GVG

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [August 1, 2022](#)

Source: <https://twitter.com/EvaKBartlett/status/1553972823399583745>

Across the street, another group of mines curbside. A preliminary search in the nearby park found most of the mines, but I was warned to walk carefully as the park wasn't officially mine-free. Having not been able to easily spot the circled and otherwise-identified mines on the street, I walked extremely carefully, wary of any object that could be covering a mine.

I saw mines on a lane behind an apartment building, on sidewalks nearby, and on leaf-strewn earth, and each time I couldn't locate them immediately. I repeat this to emphasize how insidious Ukraine's deploying of these mines is: if they are barely noticeable with warnings, it is all too easy without warnings to step on them and have your foot blown off.



Photo: Eva Bartlett

After [the mines were scattered](#) on July 30, DPR authorities created [an interactive map](#) showing areas most contaminated by the mines, giving residents a general warning of which areas to avoid walking or driving in. Some days after, however, Donetsk [experienced heavy rains](#), washing the mines from where they originally landed, rendering the initial demining efforts futile and the map irrelevant, and meaning sappers would have to re-clear areas they had deemed mine-free.

On August 6, I went to an orphanage in Makeevka, a city just east of Donetsk, where two days prior Ukraine had fired artillery containing the nefarious petal mines which Ukraine has been raining down all over Donetsk, and Gorlovka to the north.

Thankfully, all of the children had been evacuated in February, due to the proximity to the frontline.

Emergency Services sappers were working for a second day, having found 25 of the mines so far, including in the playground, on a swing, on a merry-go-round, on the roof of the orphanage itself, and around the property. A sapper suited up and prepared to destroy one more mine, lying in the grass of the playground.

Whereas in Kirovsky, sappers had detonated a group of the mines using explosive material, in this case, sappers detonated the single mine with an electric charge. Standing tens of metres back and around the side of the building—to avoid any potential flying debris—the blast from the single mine alone was still powerful. The thought of stepping on one is a dread which one can't fully understand if you haven't walked in streets and on sidewalks littered with the mines.

Ukraine targeted a Makeevka orphanage with illegal Petal mines. Emergency Services sappers demined the property, finding 26.

Thankfully, orphanage was evacuated months ago. Head Physician said Ukraine's attack on the orphanage was deliberate. A war crime.<https://t.co/TsbU0Lo3wZ>

— Eva Karene Bartlett (@EvaKBartlett) [August 9, 2022](#)

Source: <https://twitter.com/EvaKBartlett/status/1556892320397664256>

Media claims Russia is laying the mines

As with most of its war crimes against the civilians of the Donbass, Ukraine and NATO media invert reality and [claim](#) Russia is the guilty party. They cry crocodile tears for the Donetsk children Ukraine has targeted, also disingenuously claiming the now-famous [video of a DPR soldier](#) detonating a mine by throwing a tire at it was

a Ukrainian soldier demining Russian-fired mines.

The notion that Russia would explode mines over the city is not a reality-based idea. Most of the population are ethnic Russians, a significant number who now happily hold Russian citizenship. And further, it is Russian and DPR sappers putting themselves at risk to clear the streets, walks and fields of the mines.

In fact, a 21 year old DPR sapper lost a foot to such mine. Director of the Department of Fire and Rescue Forces of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Donetsk People's Republic, Colonel Sergey Neka, told me of his injury: "After the cleansing of territories from explosive objects, returning back to the transport, a mine fell from the building, as a result of which it exploded under his feet and he lost his foot."

In Makeevka, Igor Goncharov, the Chief Physician of the bombarded orphanage, spoke to me about his anger that Ukraine was targeting the property, insisting it had been deliberate, that since 2001 the orphanage was well-known to various international organizations, as well as Kiev, because, "It was the only one specialized in HIV."

According to him, "American law allowed the adoption of HIV-positive children, so the United States was the only state that adopted HIV-infected children, so we were well known both within Ukraine and the Russian Federation and abroad. When they shoot, they know where they shoot," he said of Ukraine.

"I think that this is not just inhumane, it is without morality, without conscience and without honour."

I asked him to address Ukrainian and Western claims that it was Russia which deployed the mines, Russia which is shelling Donetsk and surrounding areas, knowing full well any average local resident could likewise easily debunk the claims.

“Even without being educated in military matters, it’s easy to localize the craters. Which way they are located indicates which side they were sent from. We know perfectly well where they shoot from. It’s all from Peski, Avdeevka, Nevelskoye. You can hear the crash and the whistle coming first. Ballistics can be defined. All the shelling comes from the Ukrainian side, it is unambiguous.”

Even without that logical thinking, let’s recall that Ukraine has been committing war crimes in the Donbass for over eight years, violating the Minsk Accords signed in 2014 and 2015. That Ukraine would use Petal mines from its enormous stockpile, after already shelling and sniping civilians, it not at all out of the question.

Ukrainian nationalists openly declare they view Russians as sub-human. School books [teach this](#) warped ideology. [Videos show](#) the extent of this mentality: teaching children not only to also hate Russians and see them as not humans, but also brainwashing them to believe killing Donbass residents is acceptable. The [Ukrainian government itself funds](#) Neo-Nazi-run indoctrination camps for youths.

As mentioned at the start, Ukraine signed the [Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention](#), under which Ukraine was obliged to destroy its [6 million stock of the mines](#). However, reportedly, its stockpile [remains over 3.3 million](#) such mines.

The [convention](#), “prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines (APLs).” Further, as [outlined](#), Ukraine is, “in violation of Article 5 of the Mine Ban Treaty due to missing its 1 June 2016 clearance deadline without having requested and being granted an extension.”

Ukraine’s firing of rockets containing these mines is against international law and the [Geneva Conventions](#). Ukraine is specifically targeting civilian areas with them. It is pure terrorism. And it is another Ukrainian war crime in a very long list of war crimes stretching back over eight years.

Eva Karene Bartlett is a Canadian-American journalist who has spent years on the ground covering conflict zones in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Palestine (where she lived for nearly four years). She was a recipient of the 2017 International Journalism Award for International Reporting, granted by the Mexican Journalists' Press Club (founded in 1951), and was the first [recipient](#) of the Serena Shim Award for Uncompromised Integrity in Journalism. See her extended bio on her blog [In Gaza](#). She tweets from [@EvaKBartlett](#) and has the Telegram Channel, [Reality Theories](#). Eva can also be reached at evabartlett@hotmail.com.

Source: [CovertAction Magazine](#)

