

Russian Troops are Facing Their Own Captured Tanks on Battlefield

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Ukrainian military forces are reportedly capturing Russian tanks and using them for their own benefit.

Since the beginning of the year, numerous Leopard 2 and Abrams tanks have been promised to be sent by the West for the Ukrainians' benefit. The Abrams tanks are coming from the United States while nine Western countries—including Germany, Great Britain and Spain—have agreed to send Leopard 2 tanks.

Spain was supposed to send the tanks by April 9, though an undisclosed setback has caused a delay likely into the latter half of April. M1A1 Abrams tanks coming from the U.S. are expected by the fall and will have refurbished hulls from existing U.S. inventory stocks said to be quite similar to the M1A2 models.

Photos posted Tuesday on Facebook by the Zaporizhia Separate Territorial Defense Brigade show Ukrainian fighters operating Russian tanks, identified by Foreign Policy Research Institute senior fellow Rob Lee as T-62 Russian tanks.

"That Ukrainians are using captured T-62M tells you how much new NATO tanks are needed," Lee tweeted.

Retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel Mark Cancian told *Newsweek* via email that Ukrainians using captured Russian tanks reflects three things—one being that both militaries use the same equipment, or T-72s and T-64s when it comes to tanks.

"It would be easy to transition a unit from Ukrainian T-72s to Russian T-72s," Cancian said. "Second, the Ukrainians have captured a lot of Russian tanks—549 according to Oryx, the best unclassified source. Finally, the Ukrainians need tanks to replace their tank losses."

There have been 460 lost since the war began, again according to Oryx.

"You see countries using captured equipment occasionally," Cancian added. "For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Israelis had units equipped with Soviet tanks captured from the Egyptians and Syrians. They phased these out as they were able to get U.S. equipment."

Jordan Cohen, policy analyst at the Cato Institute, told *Newsweek* via email that tanks are certainly needed due to the "high-end weaponry" involved in the ongoing conflict. The issue is that they aren't being made fast enough and, in turn, training takes additional weeks or months.

"This gets to the fact that, throughout the conflict, Ukrainian and U.S. interests were never identical, but the lack of a negotiated settlement and the ever-increasing military assistance Washington has supplied Kyiv have led to an unsustainable demand for high-end weaponry and training that cannot ultimately resolve the conflict," Cohen said.

A Pentagon leak of intelligence documents that surfaced online last weekend included documents appearing to show that Russian forces are preparing to pay a bonus to troops who manage to damage or destroy NATO-supplied tanks to Ukraine, the *New York Times* reported.

"Financial incentives would be offered for the capture and destruction of foreign tanks, and videos of tanks being destroyed would be widely distributed to reduce the confidence of Ukraine and the West and reassure Russian troops of their ability to overcome this new weaponry," according to the top-secret document.

The document was part of a larger leak still trying to be contained by U.S. officials. It reportedly included various information about NATO's military support for Kyiv, including evaluations of Ukraine's forces and its need for launching a long-touted spring counteroffensive.

Evgeny Arifulin, who heads a military training center in Russia, told the Kremlin-owned Zvezda TV channel on Sunday that Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov has ordered the creation of "tank hunters" or "tank killers" to target Western-supplied tanks.

The capturing and use of Russian tanks by Ukrainian forces doesn't say much about the Russian army, Cohen said. He attributed it to "the nature of war" and how Russia would be more prone to lose more of its equipment due to being an attacker in a foreign nation.

"Russia transporting an Abrams tank back to Russia is simply infeasible," he said. "Ukraine transporting a Russian tank back to a base in Ukraine is more simple."

