

# Newsweek

## Video Shows Ukrainian Drone Evade, Demolish Russian Flamethrower

March 8, 2023

Nick Mordowanec

New video has emerged of a Ukrainian drone taking out a high-powered, expensive Russian flamethrower.

The Security Service of Ukraine on Wednesday posted footage on [Facebook](#) of an FPV (First-Person View) drone avoiding enemy missiles to successfully reach and collide with a purported TOS-1A thermobaric multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) at its salvo. The rocket system is known as "Solntsepek."

"The 'Second World Army' was left without another 'analogue,'" Ukrainian officials wrote in the post.

The TOS-1A, an updated version of the original TOS-1 heavy flamethrower system, reports Military Today, can reportedly cost more than \$6.5 million when accounting for servicing, training and ammunition.

Jordan Cohen, policy analyst at the Cato Institute, said thermobaric weapons launch "some of the most devastating and vile rockets in existence," which can lead to a rupturing of the lungs.

"Given what has been happening in the Donetsk, destroying this launcher is generally good for human rights—no matter one's position on the war," Cohen previously told *Newsweek*.

Ukrainian servicemen fire with a 105mm howitzer toward Russian positions near the city of Bakhmut, on March 8, 2023. New video released by Ukraine shows a drone destroying a Russian thermobaric missile launcher as battles intensify, with potential involvement by China causing serious concern globally.

The Ukrainian military has destroyed 488 Russian MLRS systems since the war began February, 24, 2022, according to daily statistics updated by the Ukraine Ministry of Defense. Russia has also lost an alleged 155,530 personnel, 6,723 armored vehicles, 5,330 vehicles and fuel tanks, 3,436 tanks, 2,463 artillery weapons, and 2,098 drones.

Russia has reportedly resorted to using spare parts as improvisation for battlefield tanks.

"Some Russian commanders, desperately short of battle-ready tanks, appear to have turned to improvising 'Frankenstein' tanks from spare parts to fill the gap in their armory," the *Kyiv Post* wrote on Wednesday.

Russia and even the West have disputed the number of Russian casualties, reported to be in the neighborhood of between 15,000 and 30,000 according to a database compiled by independent outlet Mediazona and the BBC's Russian service.

That's still well below the numbers published daily by Kyiv, including over 1,000 Russians killed in one day earlier this week, and over 50,000 since just before Christmas 2022.

As both sides continue to experience personnel losses, exacerbated by intense months-long fighting in Bakhmut in the Donbas region, the Ukrainian military is reportedly struggling to find new servicemen.

Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) announced Wednesday that it had blocked 26 Telegram channels that were allegedly helping people of military age avoid mobilization. The move followed a February 26 report by *The Economist* that said, "Ukraine has visibly stepped up mobilization activities in the first two months of this year."

China's involvement, or lack thereof, in the conflict remains unknown weeks after it issued a 12-point plan intended to lead to a ceasefire between the fighting European nations.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius has stated that NATO support for Kyiv will become even stronger should China start arming Russia.

The proposed ceasefire is impractical, according to Rajan Menon, director of the Grand Strategy Program at Defense Priorities and nonresident scholar in the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

He told *Newsweek* that it's a "dicey proposition" for two reasons: One, China doesn't want sole attention on itself by the United States and NATO by providing arms, complicating relations where there is little upside because Russia might lose militarily or policy-wise.

Also, a ceasefire is open-ended as both militaries have different goals and victory could mean different things.

"The basic problem is whether we like it or not, both sides still believe they can win the war," Menon said. "For them, being able to fight is better than a ceasefire. The situation is just not conducive [to one]."

*Newsweek* reached out to the Ukrainian and Russian defense ministries for comment.