

MedivactruckstoUkraine

Aid delivery to Ukraine - May 2025

Let's start with some facts and figures. Due to your generosity, we raised a remarkable £222,369.17 for this our ninth aid trip to Ukraine. A huge thank you to you, our supporters. This has enabled us to buy and take to Ukraine this month:

- fourteen trucks (with one truck donated) as well as a 4wd minibus at a cost of £ 113,434.48 to include new tyres and servicing of the vehicles so that they leave the UK as fit for purpose as possible, and
- the aid items all, specifically requested by our contacts, detailed in the list at the end of this report at a cost of £68,277.53.



The overall total spent on the May trip was £181,712.01. The unspent balance of £40,657.16 which arrived too late to deploy on this trip has already been used to buy trucks for our next trip of which we now have ten with an ambition to buy ten more.

To the aid bought and vehicles delivered should be added donated generators, mobility equipment, medical items and a large quantity of NHS walking aids all of which have

already been found new homes in Ukraine.

Since we started these trips in February 2022 we have raised over £1,100,000 which has enabled us to deliver 67 pickups, an ambulance, a minibus and an ATV as well as very significant quantities of medical and non-medical aid full details of which you will find on our website: medivactruckstoukraine.com

Our next trip departs on the 12th of September. If interested in joining us, do please e-mail or 'phone me on: paul@southfieldshouse.co.uk // 07891 043137. Our Ukrainian friends need our support as much as ever.

Paul Parsons

Robert Williamson, Colin Richmond-Watson, Michael Baines, Oliver Baines, Simon Keeling, Ursula Keeling, Guy Brogden, Richard Close-Smith, Freddie Wootton, Callum Watt, Christopher Coleridge Cole, Anthony White, Patrick Davidson-Houston, Archie Hainsworth, Raymond Oxford, Gerald Howarth, Michael Shipster, Oleh Nayda, Ed de Lisle, Bertie de Lisle, James Stewart, Charles Moubray, Matthew Atkin, John Errington, Lisa Hainsworth, Ian Wilson Young, Paul Parsons



‘Let’s go,’ said Simon (my husband). ‘To Ukraine?’ - ‘why not?’ ‘Well Ukraine wasn’t on my bucket list but the geopolitical importance of this war, as well as the relentless loss of life, meant that the opportunity to join MedivactruckstoUkraine and do something tangible to support Ukraine was very welcome.

The following day, emails were sent to friends, family, colleagues and neighbours alike and I was overwhelmed by the generosity of donors with busy lives and finite pockets. Without them this vital support could not be delivered. We were joining Paul Parsons and his team on his ninth trip which comprised of 27 people and 14 pickup trucks and a minibus each carefully packed with medical equipment, generators, powerpacks, fishing nets for drone protection and other aid that had been specifically requested by the various contacts who we were due to see in Ukraine. The logistics were serious - lists of the contents of each truck, vehicle maintenance and registration, paperwork for borders, insurance, passports, hotels, restaurants and refueling points all had to be carefully worked out and implemented by the team, Anthony White, Archie Hainsworth, Oleh Nayda and Paul - including setting up WhatsApp groups and coordinating 27 people into some sort of order as well as getting secure phones and liaising with Ukrainian contacts. A multi-skilled experienced team. At 6.30am we all set off in a splendid convoy and Paul’s naturally infectious good humour and boundless energy made it look deceptively easy.

The journey through France, Belgium, Germany and Poland was easy (once German customs officers were pacified). Belgium with its flat highly manicured land, Germany’s rich woodlands and finally Polish churches, vivid rape fields and storks nesting on telegraph poles made the long drive interesting rather than exhausting. One vehicle had to be abandoned near Dortmund due to a mechanical glitch but there was plenty of camaraderie and efficient administration to get

everyone to the right place on time without fuss. The abandoned vehicle following a bit of German technical input has now made its way to Ukraine as well.



A potentially tricky moment when the convoy was challenged by German customs on the autobahn. The green light was given when we explained that French customs had been too busy having lunch to stamp our documents.

We were taken to a checkpoint on the Ukrainian border which does not take commercial traffic. It was entirely empty of vehicles going to Ukraine. Those who had undertaken the journey previously said that this was unique with long queues being the norm. Being advised to be careful about what we said to the border guards was the first time I became aware of potential pitfalls. We arrived at 1.45pm but it was well over an hour before the necessary stamps were on the papers and sombre looking guards from both sides had painfully slowly checked the cargo, passports etc before finally nodding us through. After three days driving, we were finally in Ukraine and took time to take group photos at the border.

Over one million people live in Lviv, a normal busy city with Soviet style trams and traffic and unlike later in the journey, I didn't notice an absence of men though many were in uniform and others missing limbs. At 8.30am the next morning we were taken to the military cemetery in the centre of the town and I heard how much it had expanded in the last three months. The red and black nationalist flag (representing Ukrainian blood spilled on dark Ukrainian soil) and the blue and yellow Ukrainian national flag were proudly displayed on row after row of graves that were too numerous to count. Most of them had a photograph of the deceased soldier which made the loss vivid and human. Young men (and some women) killed as recently as six days ago, were smiling from graves draped with flags and fresh flowers. Beside one, I noticed a woman quickly kiss a photograph and turn to get on with her life which seemed typical of Ukrainians. At 9am every day they all stop for a minute's silence and then they focus on the future.





The next stop was equally humbling - The Veterans Rehabilitation Centre and the Unbroken project at the St Panteleimon hospital. At the Veterans Rehabilitation Centre Andriy explained how vitally important this work is for over 50 men and women *per day* coming through the doors from the front line. There are three centres in Lviv but he hopes, funding permitting, to open two more. His team work with psychologists, physiotherapists, lawyers advising on military law and applying for financial support, skills development and education as well as helping the family of missing and captive soldiers. 80% of veterans are looking for a new profession. He mentioned that the army pays 3,000 to 4,000 euros a month which can make returning to civilian life hard if the average salary is only 500 - 600 euros per month.



The Unbroken Project is also focused on bridging mental and physical support and is based in a hospital where 34% suffer from PTSD. 80% are not from Lviv but Internally Displaced People. This means that homes have to be found for families while men wait several months for prosthetic limbs to be made and fitted. Over 1,600 veterans have been given medical care since 2022, and it claims to have the biggest prosthetics unit in Europe with 15 specialists but it all takes time and money. The Unbroken Project has ambitious plans to expand and aspires to be a global holistic model for future conflicts, but it depends on its fundraising department to deliver. We saw an amputee in a wheelchair about every 2-3 minutes gliding past us like a silent ghost and it was upsetting to hear one young man shouting in bitter frustration.

Protection comes in many forms and so we took the trucks to Father Vasyl at the Greek Catholic church of Rizdva Presviatoyi Bohorodytsi to be blessed before handing over some of the trucks and aid. After a traditional Ukrainian lunch, presentation of wonderful Ukrainian gifts and a visit to the shrine of St Gregory Lacota (one of the martyrs killed under the communist regime) we left for the City Hall, where we were shown an impressive range of drones both aerial and ground before a video link presentation from the mayor who was at the airport on his way to the UK. More gifts and certificates were handed to each and every one of us by the deputy mayor and it highlighted how important and appreciated Medivactrucks is.



That evening, we met Oleksi, husband-and-wife team who suffering from PTSD and soldiers. We handed over the these last three years so that the Carpathians. Left hand requirements which we Olha reminded me that the and she founded this charity insecurity of being left alone front line. I asked if she had have time to indulge myself small compared to the bigger culture and our country. My



himself a veteran and Olha who are a run charities to support veterans families of serving and missing minibus they have been hoping for they can take veterans for therapy in drive and four-wheel drive were the eventually sourced in Germany. war did not start in 2022 but in 2014 because she felt the isolation and while her husband was fighting on the any children. 'No' she said. 'I don't with children. My personal life is picture and we are fighting for our desire to have a family can wait' For

me, that exemplified the sacrifice, resilience and determination of the Ukrainians. They need all the support they can get in this long bloody battle that they never wanted. It was time to bin the mascara and set the satnav for Sumy. Let's go.

Ursula Keeling

AID PURCHASED	Quantity	Price £
SAM Junctional Tourniquets	2	678.00
Ecoflow DELTA 2 Portable Power Station	17	10,658.00
Power banks	65	1,270.10
Burn Gels	150	377.25
Generator 2.3kw	6	1,949.99
Vented Chest Seals	300	3,056.40
Ecoflow River 2 Pro 768 Wh	6	3,474.00
Water pump	2	479.98
CAT Tourniquets	800	20,386.14
Emergency Bandages	50	334.80
Sleeping bags	10	583.09
Ecoflow River 2 Max	13	4,797.00
Generator 3.5kw	10	2,716.78
Celox Gauze	400	10,764.00
Vehicle tools	5	423.94
Portable tooth X-Ray	1	986.06
Portable ultrasound	1	4,015.00
Fishing nets 40m x 8m	4	1,327.00
	TOTAL	£68,277.53

Ukraine — A Journey to the Front Ollie Baines

To Kyiv

A 7am briefing precedes our exit from Lviv. No longer can we get away with our relaxed approach to driving and communications — from here on we are accompanied by locals, army or intelligence. Our phones are generally off and most importantly our location services disconnected. Although we are now to drive in a far stricter convoy, our phone and digital footprint has to show anything but. We are given burner phones with Ukrainian sims, and we now only stop at prearranged service stations. A few of the Brits who are not venturing further into the country wave us off. I'm driving with my father, who has been part of a previous convoy up to this point, but from here on out, it's new to us both. A sort of boy's own adventure. In a war zone.

It's flat. Vast plains of rape and plough stretch unbroken for miles either side of the road, which is as straight as anything the Romans could think up. Huge grain silos pop up from time to time — their true scale only clear from the way they dwarf the train trucks that are lined up beneath them. My father has time to spot wildlife. Birds of prey, kestrels, even a booted eagle — ducks too, but most importantly the odd stork, ludicrously perched in their giant nests atop a telegraph pole or tree. The onion spires of golden churches stand out against the sky here and there as the villages pass by, tiny cottages dotted among the scrub and trees.

Our first fuel stop adds some levity when three people nearly fill up with LPG before someone has



the sense to find out what the Ukrainian for Diesel is. It's a good reminder that we are in no way professionals. But the war still seems very far away — there is plenty of fuel, and no obvious sign of anything out of the ordinary to the west of Kyiv. The odd statue from previous eras reminds us this country is no stranger to it though. Here a tank on a plinth, there a MiG-15 casually erupting from a village roundabout. But as we get further east, there are subtle signs of things to come. Tank transporters pass us, empty, traveling back on the road to the Polish border — and of course there are no planes in the sky. Small cemeteries in every settlement become a constant reminder of the human cost, so clearly visible from the road with their flags fluttering in the breeze over each military grave. After six hours or so we stop for lunch just outside Zhytomyr. It's the first place I see young guys who are clearly in the army — short haircuts and boots a giveaway. My father meets a Brit who is delivering four ambulances in another convoy from England. It's his fourteenth trip.

As we near Kyiv we see the first real signs of destruction. Buildings blown up, not by aircraft, but by tanks. The Battle of Hostomel took place just to the north of this road. As we cross elevated sections of motorway and bridges, it becomes clear that one side of the carriageway has often been dismantled. Oleh, our Ukrainian guide, tells me that the remaining bridges are mined as well, in case the Russians get this far. I see two men in a field wearing mine-clearance gear, the cumbersome body armour and face guard visible from quite a distance. I presume they are training. One sweeps a metal detector from side to side, the other puts stakes in the ground. In other places women stand at the side of the road, holding bunches of flowers or selling jars of honey.

Kyiv is a big city, and the Dnipro is huge. Everywhere I look there are the signs of bustle and life, and more importantly a clear sense of future. New buildings seem to be going up everywhere, residential as well as business. And there is traffic. Lots of it. We creep towards the river with seemingly three million other Kyivans. There is a curious duality everywhere. We pass a marina with a fancy yacht broker on one side of the road. On the other is a vast billboard advertising a drone factory. The war is here, but life goes on.



Beyond Kyiv, the sight of uniforms and military vehicles becomes quite common. The countryside flattens out again, the fields open up into huge great squares of hundreds upon hundreds of acres of dark brown soil, and beyond that, in the distance, thin lines of trees. It's worth making a point of the size of this country. It may have been a healthy 1,300 miles from the Midlands to the far side of the Polish border, but that's four or five countries' worth of traveling. Ukraine is some 900 miles across on its own. It's like driving the width of Britain, but only in Norfolk (except somehow it's even flatter than Norfolk, if that's possible), and then doing that same drive another eight times. And all that distance is just field after field of this black earth — *chernozem* as the Ukrainians call it. No stones, or chalk, or flint. And no hills either. Just soil... and you could spread it like butter. My father comments about the vast unending flatness of Ukraine — 'you could almost drive forever,' — 'We have,' I reply.

It's no wonder it's so hard to fight here, he later reminds me, his own army background adding weight to this remark. There is so little cover, and the open areas must take forever to cross. I'm suddenly reminded of the countless drone videos I have seen online of tanks — and people — *not* making it across.

Poltava



In Poltava, a city in central Ukraine of roughly a quarter of a million, we stop for the night in a charming hotel, if rather faded in its glory. This is the first time I get to see the direct impact that expeditions like this are making out here. We hand over a variety of medical kit, generators and powerpacks to combat medics in various outfits all doing different, but incredibly important jobs. Some goes to the 403rd Separate Drone Battalion — Archil, a Georgian who has been fighting in Ukraine since 2014 meets us in a vehicle that Paul had delivered a year ago, still in good working order. They have made an eight hour round trip to meet us. In another handover, a contact made last year in Sumy, a dentist, Ihor from the 92nd Brigade, takes delivery of a tooth X-ray machine and an ultrasound for use in a field hospital. It's very clear that some of these soldiers have made a real connection with the regular members of our outfit over the years they've been doing this. Life has clearly become quite cheap for them, and certainly their attitude to the Russians who are in their

country is utter contempt. It's impossible not to make the judgement that this is going to be a deep hatred that will not shift for generations. The fact that they are having to do what they do at such a young age is the greatest tragedy of all. It brings home the massive importance that was being placed on rehabilitation when we were in Lviv. There we were taken round an incredible clinic called Unbroken, whose team work pretty tirelessly to help these veterans, some really just boys and girls, to adjust to normal life after being soldiers. In a war where they have had to embrace hell, they are going to need all the help they can get.

At dinner I meet and chat to Oleh's brother. It's almost a relief to talk to someone who has clung on to a vaguely normal life.. But while life goes on as normally as it can for some, there is no escaping



the deep sadness that underlines all of this. Michael, another Ukrainian volunteer of our group, tells me of two old ladies he chatted to at a stop on our journey earlier in the day. He asked them 'how is life here?' — 'It's very hard,' they replied, 'our husbands and sons are at the war, and we cry every day.'

It's hard not to be moved to tears. Only a day or two ago I spent an unbelievably sobering morning walking around a cemetery in Lviv. At 9am, a message came over the tannoy, and though I couldn't understand, it ended with the repeated crack of a gavel. It didn't stop at nine, but struck on thirty-eight times — the day's toll. Six graves were being dug that morning. In one cemetery. In one city. The faces of the dead smiled out from large pictures on every headstone. The most recent was twenty-seven. The youngest was nineteen.

The Road to Konotop



Two air raid warnings in the night, but as in Lviv and Kyiv, they are largely ignored until the specific route of the missile is known. We leave Poltava later in the morning, and set off on the worst road in the world. I think 50mph is slow at first, before realising we will be lucky to go 10. It must have been bad before the war, because a few years is not enough time to ravage this road to this extent. It's more a collection of potholes spoiled by some tarmac than the other way around. We drive largely on the verge for what seems like hours, weaving in and out, whilst my father — who's birthday it is — tells me about the joys of his earlier walk around the city centre and the memorial to the Battle of Poltava in 1709, when the Swedes invaded and were kicked out by the Cossacks and Peter the Great.

We pick up our new army escort at a small farm en route, important now as we are approaching checkpoints and need help to explain what on earth we are doing here. We stop unexpectedly in a tiny village. Amazingly, the car being driven by a former British

Army staff officer and an intelligence officer has nearly run out of fuel. Much ribbing ensues, but to be fair to them, they are probably both far more used to having someone else check their fuel tanks. Paul comes to the rescue in great style by buying a length of hose from the bemused Ukrainian village shop owner and syphoning one tank to another. All is well, the disgusting taste of diesel notwithstanding.

Our new Ukrainian army escorts consist of Daria, who was a civilian last year when she last met the team, and has since joined up to help with the public face of the army, and Makar, a senior lieutenant who helps command some 850 men of the 25th Separate Assault Brigade. He's clearly quite a senior officer, despite his rank, and it's a reminder of how big and how quickly the army has had to grow that a lieutenant has so many men in his charge. We stop for a photo op outside Konotop before some of the vehicles are taken off our hands by the 25th. A very eager curator shows us around the museum in the town. Several of the rooms are empty and clearly many of the finer exhibits have been taken away to safety. They have remedied this by gathering a display of captured Russian equipment and crashed drones, and in another couple of rooms turning the museum into a gallery for local artists. It's a wonderful example of making do. A bench exists in this museum on which sat Ukraine's famous poet Taras Shevchenko. Daria is persuaded to recite some lines by heart from his poem *My Testament*, which she has known since childhood.

*When I am dead, bury me
In my beloved Ukraine,
My tomb upon a grave mound high
Amid the spreading plain,
So that the fields, the boundless steppes,
The Dnieper's plunging shore
My eyes could see, my ears could hear
The mighty river roar.*



The Trenches



Driving with our remaining five vehicles deep into the forest, we arrive eventually at a rear position inhabited by troops who are rotating out of the front line. It's something of a rest stop for them, but of course quite an apprehensive moment for us. Drones are a worry here, and everything is done to disperse the vehicles in the wood and cover them with camouflage netting. Drone jitters soon abate on account of the new enemy. Mosquitoes. Whether they smelled two dozen pasty English ankles from several miles away, or were sent by the Russians, I can't quite decide. After much adjustment

of clothing and a gallon of DEET, we acclimatise. It is a fully entrenched camp, surrounded in fact by trenches with loopholes which were much closer to the front line earlier in the war, before the Kursk incursion, where these guys have been fighting.

Our bunks are deep underground in long bunkers with six feet of earth piled on top. Though reasonably basic, there is electricity inside via a daisy-chain of extension cables, and heat provided by a stove. It is by no means cold at this time of year though. The latrine is much as you'd expect, and water comes from bottles or a large jerry can hung over a pole as a wash station. The soldiers cook us a great stew and are delighted to show us some of their armoured vehicles and equipment as a treat. Other than this, the absence of personal weapons is notable, except for an AK-74 above the bunk next to mine. There is no alcohol. I share out some chocolate I have in my pocket instead.



We are each presented with a Vyshyvanka, the traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirts, and shoulder badges from the 25th. Makar tears the badge from his own uniform and gives it to me, which is an honour I won't soon forget. He is taking my car when we finally hand over the last vehicles at Sumy. Paul and Archie are presented with a medal for all the incredible work they have done. The sense of gratitude and comradeship is very evident, and Archie is clearly moved.



The Train

It's a surprisingly good night's sleep all things considered, and we prepare to set off again at 8am with the unanimous conclusion that we have had quite an adventure. A final photo as a group in our Vyshyvanka shirts — it's Ukraine's national Vyshyvanka day — before driving to Sumy to hand over the last of our kit and then board the train to Kyiv. At a final fuel stop on the way, we are buzzed by a pair of Ukrainian F-16s. Not many miles behind where we slept, life is still very normal, and Sumy itself seems quite unaffected. But the day we leave, the Russians hit a civilian bus in the city, killing nine people. We are only stopped at one checkpoint on the way into Sumy, and our phones are checked at some length by an officer. He's looking for any photos showing Ukrainian kit, and any Russian numbers in our contacts, but with the help of our friends, we are eventually allowed through.





In Sumy, as we hand over the last vehicles to the 80th Separate Airborne Assault Galician Brigade, Paul asks about the fate of some of the trucks delivered in the previous expedition. Most are still in use. Some have been destroyed. Mikola is there to thank us all

I have the chance for a final conversation with Oleh on the train after some drinks. He tells me he used to be in a band, and we swap stories about our shared career. He tells me that early in the war many felt differently about the Russians than they do now, but after the Bucha massacre, nothing was the same. Oleh talks with great emotion about people he knows who have fought and died. Vasyl Slipak, an opera singer, joined up early in the war. Friends asked him if he really wanted to risk his life when he had such a brilliant career as an international star. A spiritual man by all accounts, he said he'd made his peace with it, and that it was important to him to fight for Ukraine. He was shot by a sniper and killed in 2016. Oleh mentions another, Bogdan, a history teacher at a university. someone he clearly thought so highly of that he felt him too important to risk. 'I spoke to his brother, and on his last call with him he asked *"do you understand that people are dying there?"* Bogdan said *"It wouldn't be the worst death to die here for this."* I wanted to protect him, but eventually it happened that he died for us.' Clearly moved, he adds 'I don't know who first told this phrase, but — if there are no people who are ready to die for the nation, then the nation is dead.'

