

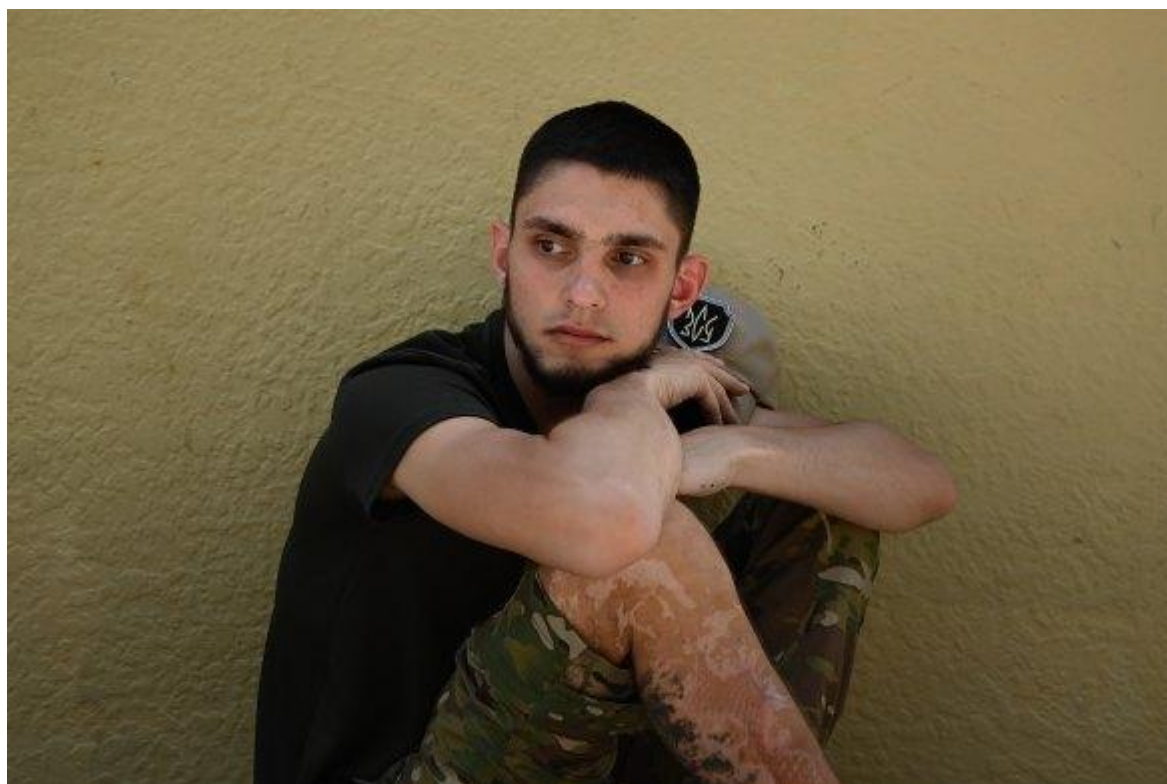
This 21-year-old was maimed by Russia. Here's what he thinks of Trump



By [Angus Dalton](#), February 24, 2025

Nazar “Kapa” grins when asked about the tattoo on his forearm. Two hands point at each other – one a skeleton, one flesh – captioned with “memento mori” in gothic font. “I was very young when I did that,” he says, sheepish.

The 21-year-old junior sergeant of the Ukrainian Armed Forces is less shy about rolling up the bottom of his camo cargo pants to reveal a lion inked across his thigh. But this lion is mottled by raw skin and scar tissue.



Drone pilot Nazar is in Sydney for reconstruction surgery for wounds he sustained on the front lines. *Credit: Kate Geraghty*

Nazar was maimed by a drone attack in combat and arrived in Australia for surgery shortly before the three-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Memorials include a Monday evening service at St Mary's Cathedral Square attended by Premier Chris Minns.

The war has entered its fourth brutal year, days after US President Donald Trump branded Ukrainian [President Volodymyr Zelensky](#) a “dictator” and wrongly blamed Kyiv for starting the war.

## **Related Article**

### **[Russia-Ukraine war](#)**

[For three years, Ukraine has shown us the meaning of courage. Have we learnt anything?](#)



**[Mick Ryan](#)**, Military leader and strategist

US officials also excluded Europe from recent peace talks with Russia and demanded \$US500 billion of revenue from Ukraine’s critical minerals, oil and gas in [exchange for aid](#).

“Ukraine is fighting for democracy,” Nazar says. “And it seems like Trump is against Ukraine.

“It should be very clear who started it, and that Russia ... is a terrorist. We cannot have any negotiations on their terms.

“Zelensky is doing everything he can for Ukraine and trying his hardest to not be forced into taking up terms from the politicians in the USA.”

On November 11, 2023, Nazar was working to deter an enemy attack near the city of Bakhmut when Russian forces struck his trench with a missile-mounted drone.

“The enemy detected our position and, due to not having sufficient electronic warfare equipment, we were unable to stop this particular drone attack,” says Nazar, sitting on a picnic table near Manly wharf.

There was another soldier sitting by the entrance of the dugout – a friend and teammate of Nazar’s. “Upon impact, he instantly burnt alive.”



Nazar, 21, said his wish for Ukraine is to be like Australia, where people are “free to walk outside and not be worried about air raid sirens and explosions.” *Credit: Kate Geraghty*

Nazar’s surgery will aim to extend his injured leg by four centimetres and reconstruct destroyed nerves, tendons and the bones in his foot, which “fused together the wrong way” under the force of the blast.

With his eyes on the harbour, Nazar lists what’s been left behind: his military officer father who has defended Ukraine since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, his mother who’s on long-term leave from work to care for children, his girlfriend in Odessa and his duty on the front line.

Nazar is being supported by Australian organisation Future Ukraine. He spoke with politicians and consuls alongside Ukraine ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko at Parliament House this month, pressing the need for more help, more equipment: his unit was down a handheld anti-drone gun when he was wounded.

Ukrainian forces remain outnumbered and outgunned. Zelensky said 46,000 of his troops have been killed and 380,000 wounded in defence of their homeland. About 20,000 children have been deported to Russia and tens of thousands of Ukrainians are missing in action or captured.

The Australian government on Monday imposed an extra 149 sanctions and travel bans on Russian individuals and entities, targeting those involved in military cooperation between Russia and North Korea.

North Korea has deployed thousands of troops to Ukraine, and Kyiv's military spy chief, Kyrylo Budanov, said on Sunday that Pyongyang was providing Russia with 50 per cent of its frontline ammunition, [Reuters reported](#).

“Deepening Russia-North Korea military cooperation is a dangerous expansion of Russia’s war, with serious consequences for European and Indo-Pacific security,” read a statement released on Monday by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Defence Minister Richard Marles and Foreign Minister Penny Wong.



Trump labelled Zelensky a “dictator without elections”. The Ukrainian leader was popularly elected in 2019 with more than 73 per cent of the vote. *Credit:AP*

Australia has committed \$1.5 billion in aid to Ukraine since the illegal invasion.

But the war grinds on. Nazar was recognised for his part in liberating a village called Klishiivka, south of Bakmut, before he was injured. Often, however, the fight to free any region is so intense that its citizens have long fled or been killed, he said. There’s no one left to rejoice once Russian forces are repelled.

“It’s constant war, constant explosions,” Nazar says. “My wish is that in Ukraine it would be the same as in Australia, that people would be free to walk outside and not be worried about air raid sirens and explosions.”

He walks with a heavy limp but hopes surgery returns him to the conflict.

“I would like to tell Australians that the war is continuing right this very minute, and that all the help is needed, either financial or rallies to bring awareness,” he says. “All that help is directly helping my teammates, my friends, to hold their positions in defence.”

**with AAP**