

# Establishing a Veteran Volunteer Corps (VVC)

Submitted by Leslie L Wilson

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- **Target Human Rights Category:** Rights of Military Personnel
- **Location/Scope:** Bucha, Ukraine
- **Duration:** 01 June to 30 November 2026 (Phase 1)
- **Implementing Partner:** Ukrainian NGO <<Abraaham>>, Project: Resilient Village Ukraine (RVU)
- **Additional Support as Needed:** Professional mental health consultant and Ukrainian – English translator
- **Total Budget Estimate:** Costs for this initial project will be covered by RVU

## Executive Summary

- *Addressing the need for veterans to reintegrate into civilian life, Resilient Village Ukraine (RVU) has designed a pilot project to establish a proposed Veteran Volunteer Corps (VVC) in Bucha. This initiative aims to transform combat experience into a specialized community resource, intended to provide a professional "sphere of safety" for local citizens. As envisioned, the VVC would focus on crisis intervention, safety, and security, serving as a disciplined, highly trained "force for good" throughout the community.*
- *Crucially, the skills developed within the VVC are designed to serve not only the local Bucha community but also to provide vital support to the military, including those in forward positions. By maintaining high standards of training and operational readiness, the proposed Corps seeks to act as a versatile asset capable of assisting in both civil and defense-related capacities.*
- *Trainings may include internationally recognized programs such as combat-level medical care (TCCC/CLS), Crisis Intervention (ICISF/CISM), and Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG) framework, recently introduced through the Heart of Azovstal with Azov Brigade veterans receiving peer-to-peer training. This approach aims to replicate the success of America's Warrior PATHH™ program, which has shown a 58% reduction in PTSD symptoms.*
- *By establishing a national standard for veteran-led service within their communities, this pilot project strives to help shape a nation enduring great trauma to one defined by strength and growth rising from trauma.*

## Problem Statement & Legal Context

In a pending proposal to the Ombudsman Office, RVU addresses specific challenges:

- *Low public awareness of the rights in the sphere of personal data protection*
- *Development of international cooperation*
- *Constant interaction with the media*
- *Open communication in social networks*
- *Equal rights and freedoms, rights of national minorities, political and religious beliefs*
- *Consideration of the rights of veterans and military personnel*

Regarding children, problems that the Ombudsman of Ukraine wants addressed include:

- *Restoring the key basic rights of the child — to life and safety, family upbringing, education, health care, social protection ... the Law of Ukrainian law now considers mentoring of children as a social service. The law defined the rules and requirements for mentors and paved the way for both individual and corporate mentoring.*
- *Additionally, “developing a unified approach to honoring the memory of the deceased.*

(Source: “The Right to Be” No. 1 2026, Ombudsman of Ukraine).

The proposed workshop trainings and volunteer activities would augment veteran’s skills to serve in capacities to meet these needs. For example, providing summer camp safety and security could address an important element lacking during an air raid alert at a 2025 camp. The proposed VVC would not only work together for their own reintegration into the Bucha community but could also assist in outreach benefitting Bucha residents as well.

**Objective:** Develop a culture of Resilient Growth among veterans starting with a trained and vetted team of 10–20 volunteers between June and November 2026 for the following purposes: to instill a strong identity and cohesion, to build bridges to the civilian community through volunteer roles, and to equip them for professional careers and successful reintegration into civilian life through innovative and proven international training programs,

This is in accordance with government’s “Veteran. Work” program for 2026-2027:

“The goal of the Program is to form a holistic state policy aimed at the economic integration of war veterans as an important component of human capital by returning them to civilian life in a manner that ensures stable employment, development of new professional competencies, and long-term economic independence.”

### Proposed Core Activities:

- **Skill-Building:** Veterans would participate in 2–4 workshops focusing on safety, security, crisis intervention, and Psychological First Aid emphasizing stress management, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills.
- **Leadership Development:** The project seeks to connect 3–5 candidates with certified training for leadership and "train-the-trainer" roles. Potential programs include TCCC/CLS, ICISF/CISM, and PTG. These would be trained to facilitate classes for civilians, humanitarian NGOs, other veterans, even active-duty military.
- **Community Partnership:** In cooperation with the City of Bucha, VVC could be trained to form a civilian auxiliary to benefit local fire and police. As defenders, protectors, instructors, and role models, VVC could train a youth corps in PTG skills as well as people with disabilities, elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

- **Professional Identity:** To foster a distinct team identity, the volunteers would create their own brand: an official name, logo, and high-visibility gear (safety vests, caps, patches) as well as a social media platform.
- **Innovation:** Throughout the pilot, we propose to establish a veteran “Think Tank” to explore broad potential for future civil and defense applications.

**About Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG):** process will provide the foundational structure for the project. The effectiveness of this approach is backed by a 2024 study of 184 American veterans in the Warrior PATHH™ program, which showed a 54% increase in PTG growth scores and 49% decrease in PTSD symptoms over an 18-month period. This pilot project will evaluate similar metrics. Coordination will be explored with the Heart of Azovstal group, following the America-based PTG peer-to-peer training, now being replicated by this group in Ukraine with 90 Azov Brigade veterans in 2025. The RVU project includes a PTG-qualified coordinator whose 20-year profession in Emergency Management, Response & Recovery includes 10,000+ hours disaster field experience. (See attachments.)

### Beneficiaries

The initial orientation workshops would be open to 10–20 volunteers. Volunteers from this group would be invited to participate in more formal trainings, creating a cohesive “tribe”. A core leadership group of 3–5 veterans would be selected for additional certified training to begin building a peer-to-peer training program for other veterans, the public, and active-duty military. As envisioned, the entire community will benefit from the VVC, serving as a pilot project for adaptation throughout Ukraine.

### Strategic Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- **SDG 16:** Peace, justice and strong institutions
- **SDG 17:** Partnerships to achieve the goals

### Implementation Plan & Milestones

Our six-month pilot program is designed as a collaborative journey with the City of Bucha, focusing on building a foundation for long-term impact.

- **Month 1:**
  - Introductory workshop, Recruitment, vetting, and deep-training workshops, and certifications
  - Develop official relationships/MOUs with City of Bucha and other interested partners
  - Invite local professionals to help develop and run the local workshops
- **Months 2-5:**
  - Participate in community activities as agreed upon
  - Continue workshops and certifications
  - Conduct training exercises to sharpen skills
  - Develop leadership and veteran trainers to conduct RVU workshops for civilian/military groups
- **Month 6:**
  - Impact reporting
  - Revise and continue basic work
  - Broaden the scope of the Veteran Think Tank
  - Plan and begin implementation of Phase 2.

## Sustainability & Institutional Integration

This project has the seeds of a self-sustaining national model. To scale up, RVU seeks to secure international support by showcasing veterans' knowledge, skills, and abilities - the "KSAs" backbone of American government hiring policies, which also **considers related volunteer experience on par with paid positions**.

**Phase 2:** by integrating international emergency management experts and green-compliant technologies, we envision an off-grid "Resilient Village" in or near Bucha. This would not only serve as home for some of our local heroes – who would be part of the construction team - but also provide a "home away from home" for international recruits—offering them a desperately needed support network, language skills, and a community where they can truly belong. Similar to Air Force/Civilian Air Patrol in America, we would pursue the idea of establishing an army auxiliary to assist in such roles where the army often lacks resources to meet these needs. Land is also available in the Ivankiv area to start building more inexpensive "tiny home" communities, not just for veterans, but IDPs, soldiers in training or on leave, vulnerable populations, international workers, humanitarians producing income for the community. Trainings and workshops could be held to raise additional revenue in the "Razom Center", a multi-purpose, community building at the heart of each Resilient Village (see attachments).

## Monitoring & Evaluation

The success of this pilot project is intended to be measured through a robust framework that captures both the individual growth of our veterans and the strengthening of the Bucha community. The metrics strategy aims to provide transparent, data-driven results over the six-month pilot period.

- **Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)** – a globally recognized tool for PTG evaluation (see attachment) We'll use a modified version for our project tailored to Ukrainian veterans\*
- WHO-standard metrics commonly used in Ukraine - if local mental health professionals are involved.
- Detail activities VVC participates in (summer camps, public events): size of event, population attending
- Veteran participation and retention rates in: the VVC program, each training, each activity
- 4-12 Telegram posts (City of Bucha, Buch Info)
- 3-10 Articles, news releases, interviews, or invitations to media to attend our events
- 6-10 LinkedIn posts
- Assist veterans to develop 1-2 social media platforms to post 4-12 VVC updates (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) including development of skills in PowerPoint, Canva, and various AI applications.
- RVU Presentation at the America House, Kyiv (Renew 2025 discussions and set date).

\* Kasiiianenko, D. (2025). Ukrainian-Language Version of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI-UA): Adaptation and Psychometric Validation. *Visnyk of V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series Psychology*, (79), 99-112. <https://doi.org/10.26565/2225-7756-2025-79-13>

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## Certified Trainings

Offered by CSOs in Kyiv area. May be free. If not, RVU will provide scholarships for 2-3 candidates.

1. **TCCC/CLS** – The standardized **Tactical Combat Care Casualty Care/Combat Lifesavers Course** developed by the American Joint Trauma System, Agency for Health Care has been adapted for training Ukrainians, especially deployed military. Besides the official training offered by several CSOs in the Kyiv area, there are many online videos in Ukrainian which can be incorporated into our workshops and tactical exercises.  
<https://tccc.org.ua/collection/tccc-clc>
2. **ICISF/CISM - International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. (ICISF)** is the premier training and certifying body for the **Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)** model, one of three foundational stress management systems used by the United Nations. The two basic courses and many specialty trainings represent a comprehensive, multi-component system for crisis intervention. By training 2 or 3 veterans, we can establish an official CISM team (a legal NGO under ICISF), the first in Ukraine.  
<https://icisf.org/cism-live/creating-a-cism-team>
3. **Posttraumatic Growth (PTG)** (see attached PDF) - it measures how veterans build a stronger life after war. It incorporates elements of their highly successful programs: **Warrior PATHH™** (designed for combat veterans, first responders) and **Struggle Well™** (for emergency services personnel). This positive approach to dealing with potential or actual PTSD does not seek to restore pre-trauma levels (resilience), but rather create a path to higher functioning, greater maturity. It employs many commonly used tools (art therapy, storytelling, mindfulness, and targeted exercises that can be incorporated by partnering with local professionals, developing closer ties on many levels.  
<https://bouldercrest.org>

## Proposed RVU Workshops

Both Civilian and Paramilitary Versions Available

1. Veteran Corps “Boot Camp” – initiation into VVC job skill training and volunteering
2. Psychological First Aid – for Yourself and for Others
3. Building Personal and Team Resilience
4. Basic Stress Management Techniques
5. Communication Skills
6. Emotional Intelligence Skills
7. Crisis Intervention Skills
8. Leadership Skills
9. Cognitive Learning Skills
10. Career Network – Guest speakers, resume & LinkedIn profile building, AI for job search & apply strategies
11. Computer Skills Lab -Including innovations in Ukrainian-English real-time conversations
12. VVC Think Tank - Innovative Dual-Language forum & post-event “Hotwash” (What went right, what went wrong, what can we do better next time) to develop and refine Corps trainings and activities.

1. All taught in-house
2. Peer-to-peer forma
3. Train-the-trainer versions for future classes to be taught *in Ukrainian by Ukrainians*
4. Initial classes in English require translator
5. Recordings made available on YouTube with Ukrainian subtitles

Concepts of all-inclusiveness, equal rights and freedoms, open communication, and personal data protection are emphasized throughout all workshops and activities.

Initial workshops are taught in English by an American emergency manager, disaster response & recovery, a 20-year professional and volunteer with over 10,000 work hours in disasters: throughout America, in Tajikistan (developing many of the Resilient Village concepts for vulnerable populations in the Pamir Mountains along the Afghan border) and now Ukraine since 2022. Various innovative approaches for translation into Ukrainian will be used. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> month, Ukrainian veteran co-instructors will be trained to conduct a selection of workshops, initially under American supervision, gaining full autonomy as skills increase. Bringing Ukrainian veteran expertise to the workshops will create valuable courses for civilian, military, and international groups working in Ukraine. This has the potential to develop into a veteran-led business. Creating a business incubator is part of Phase 2: Creating a Resilient Village for Veterans.