

Establishing a Veteran Volunteer Corps (VVC)

Proposed 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)
- **Total Budget Estimate:** Costs for this initial project will be covered by Resilient Village Ukraine

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. They aim 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 of Ukraine, specific challenges they outline are addressed including:

- *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).

Workshop trainings and volunteer activities can tailor the skills of our volunteers to serve in capacities to meet these needs. Providing safety and security at summer camps (an important element totally lacking during an air raid alert during one 2025 summer camp). The VVC will not only work together for their own reintegration into their local community but also can assist in outreach to the local community.

Proposed Intervention

Objective: To establish an identity, cohesion for veterans to aid reintegration into civilian life by developing a 10-20 veteran volunteer team, trained and vetted, between June and November 2026. The PTG process will provide the structure for the project. A 2024 study evaluated 184 veterans in the **Warrior PATHH™** program showed a 54% increase in PTG scores and a 49% decrease in PTSD symptoms over 18-months. Similar metrics will be evaluated here. Contact will be made to explore possible coordination with the Heart of Azovstal group who facilitated PTG instructor training for Mariupol veterans in 2025. My PTG-qualified training allows me to use the techniques in my own work as an Emergency Manager in Disaster Response and Recovery.

- trained via 2-4 workshops in safety, security, crisis intervention, and Psychological First Aid skills as well as possible external certifications. This will enable veterans to serve now as defenders and protectors in their local community, especially for: children, people with disabilities, elderly, returning military, and other vulnerable populations.
- **Core Activities:**
 - Receive training to build personal and team resilience and growth as well as safety, security, crisis intervention and practical skills for personal and professional development. *(See Appendix)*
 - Connect with certified training for 3-5 candidates for leadership and train-the trainer roles. Possible programs include: TCCC/CLS, ICISF/CISM, Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) *(See Appendix)*
 - Cooperating with the City of Bucha to become a calming presence, serving as crisis interventionists and/or safety & security for summer camps and large public events, meetings, etc.
 - Branding to form distinct identity: official volunteer-chosen name. logo, safety vests, caps, patches, etc.
 - Establish a civilian auxiliary to partner with veterans. Examples: local psychologists to share self help techniques for the PTG workshops, children’s and young adult corps trained to share PTG skills, etc.
 - Throughout the work, establish the concept of a veteran “Think Tank” with broad potential for the future.

- **Beneficiaries:** The initial team will have 10-20 volunteers who have undergone at least two Beyond Resilience Workshops, forming a cohesive “tribe”. A core leader group of 3-5 veterans will be selected for additional certified training, including at least one train-the-trainer certification to start building a peer-to-peer training program for other veterans, the larger public, and active-duty military. Going forward, the entire community will benefit from the activities of VVC. This is 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

- **Month 1:**
 - Recruitment, vetting, and 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 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
 - Implement Phase 2

Sustainability & Institutional Integration

RVU plans to continue development of recruiting, training, expanding Phase 1 operations under the current cost structure, but with development of international investors from the extensive emergency management community which includes many American veterans that the head of RVU is actively engaged with. International grants will be pursued, especially for the EU-compliant green projects planned as part of the first Resilient Village construction. The first community is planned for the Bucha area. It would also address the needs of international recruits being trained by the military in Bucha. Their needs include a Ukrainian “home” where they can store gear when deployed and return to when on leave, be integrated into the local community. This includes the need to establish bank accounts, develop language & cultural skills, develop an emergency Point of Contact (POC) for family abroad, providing a family-style support network while in Ukraine. Many wish to live in Ukraine permanently. The village concept supports this group, many of whom bring previous military and other valuable experience to Ukraine.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- **Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI)** – a globally recognized tool for PTG evaluation. We’ll use a modified version for our project tailored to Ukrainian veterans.
- WHO-standard metrics used in Ukraine - if local mental health professionals involved.
- Number of veterans attending each workshop
- Number of veterans trained in leadership roles for the Veteran Volunteer Corps
- Number of veterans receiving outside certifications (ICISF, TCCC/CLS, PTG, etc.)
- 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

Monitoring & Evaluation (continued)

- Media:
 - 4-12 Telegram posts (City of Bucha, Buch Info)
 - articles or news releases, invitations to media to attend selected events:
 - 1-4 Ukrainian media outlet (Kyiv Independent, Kyiv Post, etc.)
 - 1-3 international podcasts, news releases (Ukraine the Latest, Silicon Curtain, JP Lindsey, etc.)
 - 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 discussions and set date)

Contact Information

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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-cls>
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 of 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, 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. Building Personal and Team Resilience
2. Basic Stress Management Techniques
3. Communication Skills
4. Psychological First Aid – for Yourself and for Others
5. Crisis Intervention Skills
6. Leadership Skills
7. Cognitive Learning Skills
8. Computer Skills Lab -Including innovations in Ukrainian-English real-time conversations
9. 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.

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 3rd 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.