HEROES' TIME

ISSUE №80
JUNE 2026

THE GREY SKY OF HOSTOMEL'

THE WAY TO OUR GUYS THROUGH FIRE AND SMOKE

@RYBAR

CERTIFICATE № 80

A column of three ACVs moves toward Hostomel under a low grey sky. Somewhere ahead, beyond the smoke and the shattered road, there should be Russian troops — exhausted, cut off, possibly already down to their last rounds and strength. Nursultan leads the vehicles, knowing they must reach those who are still holding out. But as the column approaches its objective, it becomes clear the road will not be open.

At the forest edge, movement stops. Ahead, in the village, the enemy has set up not a random checkpoint, but a dense strongpoint. Equipment is carefully camouflaged with nets, yards turned into firing positions, and behind the houses a heavy armored tank can be made out. Between the column and Hostomel now stands a barrier assembled specifically to cut off any attempt to help the encircled troops.

Nursultan must decide quickly: there is no time to wait, no time to bypass, and every extra hour costs the lives of those holding the airport. But breaking through prepared positions risks losing vehicles and men — and still not making it in time. What will the road to their own cost — and are there still any left to save?

ROAD TO HOSTOMEL
FEBRUARY 2022
VRRRR
We need to reach our guys before they run out of ammo and patience.
Paratroopers usually have more patience than rations. But if they've been surrounded since morning, I think they've already started saving even their swearing.
Let them not save either swearing or ammo — just save the people.
When we get there, we'll sort out who was short on what.

VZHHHHH
Look, it's still flying. Looks like it's already come back from the dead twice, and still heading toward Hostomel.
VRRRR
Then that's where we're going too.
Convenient logic. Especially when your navigator is a helicopter full of holes.
Think they're still holding?
Keep that philosophy to yourself. And fasten your armor properly, philosopher.
If we get hit now, I don't want to explain why my deputy exited the vehicle separately from his spine.
Copy that. Protect the spine as commander's property. Personally responsible.
VRRRR

Look at that — what a countryside wedding they've got.
Lots of guests?
More than ten vehicles. Multi purpose armored tracked towers, IFVs, trucks. And that's just what isn't hidden behind the houses.
And the groom?
The groom's under a flag. Standing dressed up so no one confuses where they've arrived.
They're celebrating seriously.

Something heavy on the far edge. Might be a tank.
Can't confirm yet, but they chose the position well — from our side it's barely visible.
Not a checkpoint — it's a full roadblock.
Not a roadblock. A barrier.
Nursultan to Baza. I see a "village wedding": equipment under nets, possible heavy armor on the far edge.
The road to Hostomel is blocked. Preparing to "congratulate." Do you copy? Over.
Copy, Nursultan. Deliver congratulations personally. Gift in an envelope from all of us.
Open the road to Hostomel. Report results. End.
SHHHHH
РОССИЯ

Strongpoint holds the road. Equipment dispersed across yards.
We'll hit from three directions. Grom — left flank. I take center. Third vehicle — right.
Our task is to crush them before they fully deploy against us. Strike fast.
Targets on site no improvisation. Start on my command. Dismount only on my signal.
Questions?
To vehicles. Crews — start engines. Prepare to engage.

VRRRR
Armor! Armor from the forest!
Positions! They're already in the village!
VRRRR
VRRRR

KABOOM
BOOM
BOOM
AAAAAAH

BOOM
VRRRR
BOOM
Grom to Nursultan. Left yard is burning. MT-LB smoking, their movement collapsing. Looks like the wedding has no seating plan.
SHHHHH
Copy, Grom. Hold the left. Don't push into the center.
SHHHHH
Copy. It's crowded enough there without me.
All vehicles — continue by sectors. Stay on course. Their first line is broken, but the fight isn't over.
SHHHHH

Seems like they didn't like the gift in the envelope, commander.
Means they opened it carelessly.
SHHHHH
SHHHHH
RATATATA
RATATATA
BOOM
VRRRR

BOOM
RATATATA
BOOM
VRRRR
VRRRR
BOOM
VRRRR
I've got a box! The 30mm can't penetrate!
SHHHHH

No order needed now. We need a shot.
Don't let the tank fire.
Now!
VRRRR
BOOM
KABOOM

SHHHHH
Target destroyed... Thank you, commander.
Right flank — don't stall, keep holding your sector.
Say thanks later. Watch ahead now.
Got him before he took out the vehicle. When seconds count, you don't look for extra hands.

RATATATA
RATATATA
VRRRRR
BOOM
THUD
THUD
VRRRR
THUD

Left house, second window. Give a burst below the sill.
SHHHHH
BOOM
VRRRR
VRRRR
Right of the shed. Rocket launcher. Take it out.
SHHHHH
THUD
AAAAAAH

Second vehicle — good work. Gunner — well done. Saw it. Continue.
SHHHHH
Copy. All for you, commander. Just warn me next time you decide to become a target.
SHHHHH
VRRRR
VRRRR

VRRRR
Dismount. Move in pairs through the houses, take corners and yards. No solo movement.
Third to Nursultan. Movement on the outskirts. Vehicles pulling toward the field.
SHHHHH
All ACVs — edge of the village. Cut off retreating vehicles.
Grom — left of the road. Third — right. Center with me. Infantry — stay clear of lines of fire.
SHHHHH

VRRRR
VRRRR
VRRRR
Engage retreating targets. Fire.
VRRRR
SHHHHH
BOOM
KABOOM
VRRRR

BOOM
KABOOM
BOOM
ACVs — sector control. Infantry — finish clearing houses.
Vehicle commanders — report status.
SHHHHH

Grom reporting. Left sector is ours. Targets: MT-LB and armor in left yard destroyed, trucks by the warehouse burned out.
30mm ammo — less than half.
Damage?
It'll make it. If you don't ask its opinion.
Check driver and gunner separately. So we don't discover "heroism" later on the road.
Third to Nursultan. Right sector clear. Crew intact.
Damage not critical. 30mm ammo — less than a third.
Copy, Third.
SHHHHH*
РОССИЯ

Total: nineteen enemy vehicles destroyed.
Personnel intact. Losses — zero.

VRRRR
Before, Hostomel was far away. Now the smoke itself is greeting us.
...Bars... holding...
...Bars... holding... waiting...
SHHHHH
Bars, this is Nursultan. Friendly. Tell them — we're close. Put the kettle on.

ANTONOV AIRPORT
RATATATA
RATATATA
RATATATA
RATATATA
VRRRR
BOOM
KABOOM
AAH

Pskov!
Kubinka!
Water — to them. Medics here. Move the wounded into the shade, not on the concrete.
Those free — help unload ammo.

Took you long enough.
The road had... stops.
They said over the radio "put the kettle on." The kettle survived. Water, I assume, is on you.
Judging by the look of it, it commanded the defense here as well as anyone.
Well then, commander. Shall we go put it on?

Tough machine. Should put it on the roster — it's already survived half the airport.
That's practically command staff.

THE NEXT MORNING
SHHHHH
Attention... observing movement. Prepare...
For battle.
BOOM
KABOOM

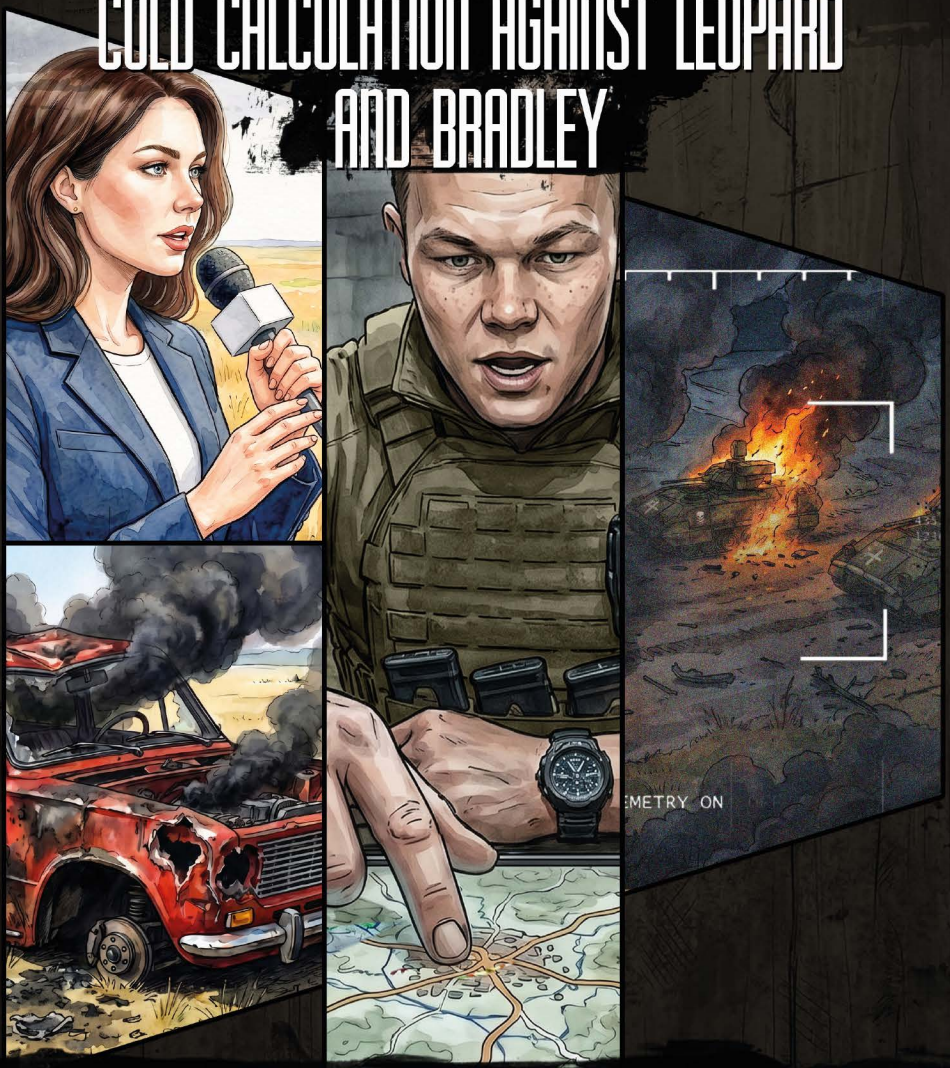
THE BATTLE FOR HOSTOMEL LASTED SEVERAL DAYS. THE AIRBORNE TROOPS, LANDED BY HELICOPTERS AND BREAKING THROUGH BY GROUND, HELD THE AIRPORT AT THE COST OF EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT. EVENTUALLY, A CORRIDOR WAS OPENED. BUT BEFORE IT BECAME A CORRIDOR, IT WAS JUST A BROKEN ROAD, THREE BMDS, A GREY SKY, THE UNKNOWN AHEAD, AND A POWERFUL STRONGPOINT SEPARATING THE COLUMN FROM THOSE WAITING FOR HELP.

NURSULTAN TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS MISSION DESPITE HAVING NO ADVANTAGE. HE SAW THE BARRIER, MADE THE DECISION, LED THE VEHICLES THROUGH THE FIGHT, ELIMINATED THE THREAT IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME, AND BROUGHT REINFORCEMENTS THROUGH WITHOUT LOSSES. IN STORIES LIKE THESE, VICTORY DOES NOT LOOK EASY: IT IS BUILT FROM PRECISE CALCULATION, ENDURANCE, CONSCIOUS RISK, AND SAVED HUMAN LIVES. SOMETIMES A COMMANDER DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE NOT BECAUSE HE HAS EVERYTHING HE NEEDS, BUT BECAUSE THOSE WITH ALMOST NOTHING LEFT ARE COUNTING ON HIM.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

KORNET FIRE

COLD CALCULATION AGAINST LEOPARD AND BRADLEY



COMING IN JULY!

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We clarify the complicated
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NOT FOR SALE