



# IMPACT REPORT

**“...informal assistance has come to play a crucial role in many aspects of the Ukrainian war effort...”**

---

# Contents

Letter from the Founding Director	03
About Sabre	04
At a Glance	06
Impact to Date	07
What our Students Say	08
Coverage	09
Growing our Network	10
Q&A with Sabre's Training Director	13
What our Instructors Say	15
Looking Forward	18



# Letter from the Founding Director



Kevin Leach  
Sgt (Retd)

Founding Director

As I write this, Ukraine is fighting heroically, countering a ruthless enemy through resolve, adaptability and bravery.

This has not changed since we founded Sabre Training Advisory Group in 2022. Nor has Ukraine's need for effective, relevant on-the-ground support. As a joint Ukrainian-Western initiative founded by Five Eyes veterans, our volunteer team continues to work tirelessly to equip Ukrainian Defenders with the skills to repel the enemy and come home alive.

More than 1000 days since the full scale invasion began, Ukraine's manpower needs are more urgent than ever. No matter how the war progresses in 2025, equipping Ukrainians with NATO-aligned skills adapted to the reality of their battlefield will remain critical to securing a just and lasting peace.

This impact report captures just a small part of what we have accomplished since our founding. As an NGO funded by small donors, none of it would have been possible without the support of our champions and volunteers. Thank you for standing with Sabre and Ukraine's defenders.

Слава Україні!

Kevin Leach, Sgt (Retd)

Founding Director

Sabre Training Advisory Group

*"We are gathering important lessons learned, and defining how conventional war is fought in the 21st century. This experience, put into the right hands, will save the lives of soldiers in NATO's member nations."*



# About Sabre

04



## About

Sabre Training Advisory Group (Sabre) is a joint Ukrainian - Western not-for-profit initiative with NGOs registered in Ukraine and Canada. Sabre was founded in November 2022 by retired Sgt Kevin Leach, a 10-year veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces who served as an OSCE ceasefire observer in Ukraine from 2018 until the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Sabre's leadership team and instructors are volunteers and carefully vetted, with instructors required to provide records of military and instructor experience in a NATO or allied military. Our training is delivered in Ukraine, allowing us to rapidly and flexibly respond to the requests and requirements of our Ukrainian partners.

To date, Sabre has worked with the 72nd and 68th Brigades of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), the 22nd and 4th Brigades of the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU), and others.

As of 2024, Sabre is recognized as an official partner of the NGU.

Through our strong in-country partnerships, we are working to meet Ukraine's immediate training needs with NATO-aligned methodologies while helping transform the Ukrainian way of war.

## Mission

To strengthen Ukraine's immediate and long term defensive capabilities by:

- Helping Ukraine meet its critical manpower needs;
- Facilitating capacity-building;
- Driving the modernization of Ukraine's training design and development, contributing to interoperability with NATO forces.

**"...such support  
has significantly  
enhanced  
Ukraine's fighting  
capacity."**



# At a Glance

06



## Training Focus

- Field-level soldiering and medical care
- Mission planning & leadership
- Live Fire Tactical Training (LFTT)
- Specialist/Role specific training i.e Armour

## Sabre has trained with:



68th Jager  
Mechanised  
Brigade



4th Rapid  
Reaction  
Brigade



72nd Mechanised  
Brigade



78th Special Purpose  
Regiment 'Hertz'



22nd Separate  
Brigade Kyivska Rus

**31**

INSTRUCTORS

**7**

NATIONALITIES

**3**

WOMEN

**5**

INTERPRETERS

**100%**

UKRAINIAN

**2**

BASES

**700+**

CAPACITY

# Impact to Date

07

*"One day by chance in a random coffee shop I met a soldier that had attended Tacmed training with me, he was recovering from combat wounds and said he'd be dead if it weren't for the training - that had an impact."*

Sabre volunteer instructor, veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces



**3800+** ↗

Ukrainian defenders trained

**40,000+** ↗

Volunteer hours completed

**60%** ↘

Reduction in casualties\*

\*small sample size, dependent on sufficient time to deliver training

**\$207,000+** ↗

Medical & training supplies donated



# What our Students Say

08

***"I am a captain of the National Guard of Ukraine with the call sign "Black" and I want to share my experience working with the team of military veteran instructors Sabre about the work done to organize the unit and teach certain skills for survival and effective destruction of the enemy.***

*The team of instructors showed their great professionalism and approach to training personnel, the information they provide is accessible, high-quality and understandable. In general, the unit gained a lot of experience from training, both in physical education, tactical training and individual combat training. Almost all the skills that were acquired during the training were used in the war directly in clashes with the enemy. Where it made it possible to perform combat and special tasks more effectively and save the lives of personnel.*

*Unfortunately, there are losses of comrades, because the enemy is insidious and develops, coming up with new threats and new ways of killing. Our military, our tigers can resist with manpower even in larger numbers, but the number of drones that the Russian aggression uses, in my opinion, is a deadly force, effective, but in terms of war, in my opinion, not honest. People do not know how to fight against drones, only jam them with electronic warfare and hide from them. Therefore, we are forced to look for new ways of war ourselves, new ways of fighting an insidious enemy.*

*The Sabre team also does not stand still and I think that in further exercises it will take into account our experience in modern warfare where absolutely everything hostile works against you, but our task, our goal is to outwit the enemy even in such conditions that surround us, which we are doing.*

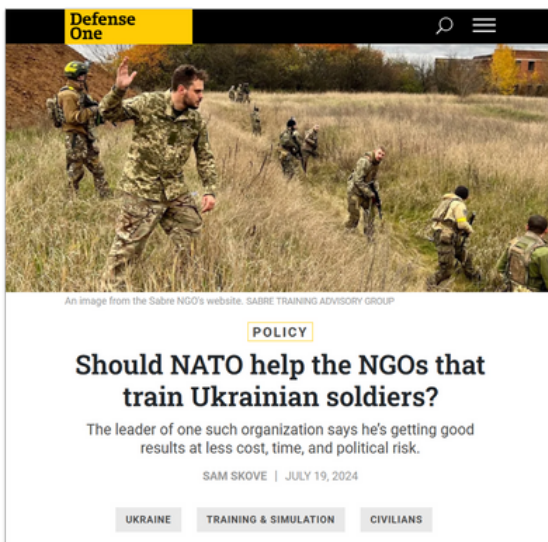
*We will win and together with our friends from the Sabre team we will do it together. Together and to the end. Glory to Ukraine and the Heroes Glory!"*

# Coverage

09

Since 2022, Sabre has been working hard to keep Ukraine and the importance of effective training top of mind. Sabre's work has been covered by **Foreign Affairs**, **DefenseOne**, **CBC** and other outlets. To remain engaged with grassroots civil society networks aiding Ukraine, Founding Director Kevin Leach regularly participates in X spaces, interviews and podcasts.

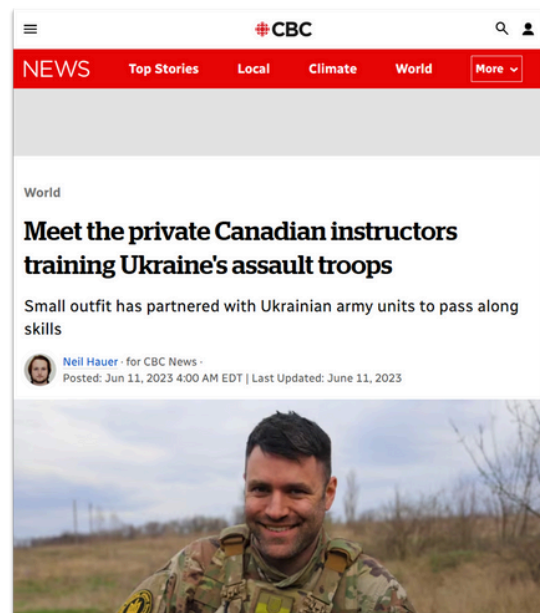
**Defense  
One**



**FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS**



 **CBC**



# Growing our Network

10

## **Sabre is committed to working with others who share our vision for a victorious and resilient Ukraine.**

Based in Kyiv and around the globe, our team regularly engages with civil society organisations, foundations, government representatives, innovators and investors committed to Ukraine. Our aim is to build awareness of, and support for, our mission, and to ensure our efforts align with broader strategic goals.



## **Aligning with Formal Assistance**



Since 2022, Sabre has made an effort to engage defense attachés from NATO countries. In fall 2024, Sabre was joined by members of the defense attaché office of the Canadian Embassy to Ukraine, giving them a firsthand look at our work.

Earlier this year, thanks to referrals from our network, members of our team traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with aligned stakeholders.



# Connecting Training + Tech

**Training must keep pace with innovation.**

**Innovation must include the people it's designed to serve.**

In 2024, Sabre expanded its outreach to, and engagement with, the defense tech innovation ecosystem in Ukraine.



In October 2024, Founding Director Kevin Leach was invited to speak at **Invest in Bravery Kyiv**, an event connecting investors and innovators shaping the future of defense.

As a speaker on the “Defense Tech & Dual Use: New Frontiers” panel, Kevin emphasized the critical importance of effective and consistent training for capability development, both for testing new technologies and for ensuring what is taught keeps pace.

He urged attendees to invest not only in technology but the people who operate it for more effective capability development.



*“Like it or not, human beings will not be replaced by technology on the battlefield before this war is over. Like it or not, training cannot be replaced by technology: we will never automate war, the infantry will always be needed to hold territory. It requires time, repetition, and correction. There are no shortcuts.”*

Kevin Leach, Sgt. (Retd)  
Founding Director  
Sabre Training Advisory Group



**“Mobilizing these informal networks will not only help the United States and its allies and partners translate their significant aid packages to Ukraine into lasting success against Russia.”**

*“Ukraine’s Other Allies”, Foreign Affairs  
Jahara Matissek, William Reno, and Sam Rosenberg  
July 19, 2023*

# Q&A with Sabre's Training Director James Roberts, Capt (Retd)



*James Roberts is a former British Army Captain (2015-2023) with a background in the design, construction and execution of military training to NATO and Non-NATO forces. As Sabre's Training Director, he brings practical experience in the conduct of large scale expeditionary live and dry training for the British Army, as well as the development and mentoring of Battlegroups and Sub-Units of the British Army's combat arms.*

*We asked him to reflect on Sabre's training efforts to date and how he sees Sabre contributing to a secure future for Ukraine.*

---

## **Tell us about what motivated you to get involved with Sabre? What pulled you to training?**

I felt a strong sense of duty. When I joined the army I did so with the intention of making the world around me a better place. I couldn't stand by and watch an innocent nation be ripped apart.

I chose to contribute through training because it is the most effective way a former Western military veteran can support Ukraine. Training

is a force multiplier. Yes, I'd love to go and scratch the itch of fighting in the trenches, I was an infanteer and reconnaissance officer, it's what I spent my whole career training to do. But one Jim commanding a company versus 100, 200, 300 well-trained Ukrainians every few months - which is going to be more effective? I chose where I can best achieve an effect which will ultimately help Ukraine.

## **How have our trainees' experiences shaped our programs?**

We constantly evaluate the Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) from the front and integrate them into our training, rather than strictly follow British platoon attack methods. Beyond basic soldiering, squad, platoon, and company-level training focuses on mission command, combined arms manoeuvre, control measures, and fundamentals like assault, suppress, and reserve. A Ukrainian platoon can be as small as 15 personnel compared to our typical 30-35, so adapting Western doctrine to their battle space and constraints ensures practical training. It's about combining the lethality of Western warfare with Ukrainian experience for a more effective force.



**Building on that theme, many of Sabre's instructors are veterans from NATO militaries who have participated in official training missions to Ukraine. Could you share an example of how training delivered by NGOs like Sabre may differ from formal missions?**

I was witness to a scene on OP INTERFLEX in the UK earlier this year where the instructors weren't considering the realities of the Ukrainian conflict when mentoring and critiquing the Ukrainian troops.

A young 2Lt criticized a Company for using grenades in a building whilst trying to make a point of committing too many men to one building. If it were in the UK or anywhere within Western Europe, throwing grenades upstairs would be dangerous, as our floors are generally made from wood, so the chance of fragments hitting troops below and injuring them is real.

However, in Ukrainian towns and cities, buildings with more than one floor are made of concrete and steel. These Ukrainians had been using this technique to fight upstairs and had success against the Russians because there was no danger of fratricide from fragmentation.

While well-intentioned, when a Western instructor tells them not to do something they've seen work with their own eyes, that Western instructor loses credibility, even if the fundamental point they are trying to make is correct.

The way war is fought is constantly evolving. While formal training missions are fundamentally important to Ukraine's defense, they cannot be the only way we help Ukraine generate forces. We need all hands on deck, and we need to train Ukrainians *with* Ukrainians, in Ukraine.

NGOs like Sabre have the freedom to meet Ukrainians where they are at. We have learned to listen to the Ukrainians, and to incorporate their experience, which may vary massively from unit to unit, into what we teach and how. This builds a sense of ownership, which in turn builds trust.

**We often say "training saves Ukrainian lives". Could you tell us more about that?**

We train Ukrainian defenders on advanced combat tactics and lifesaving medical care—skills that directly improve their ability to fight and survive on the front lines. Past students have repeatedly told us that their training saved lives.

We have also delivered critical medical equipment, ensuring Ukrainian medics are equipped to save lives in the toughest conditions.

**Looking back on Sabre's efforts since 2022, what are you most proud of?**

I'm most proud of the quality of training Sabre has delivered, even with minimal resources. We've stayed focused on our mission: helping more Ukrainian soldiers return home to their families. We've done this with volunteers and funding from small donors. We have shown that we can be a cost-effective force multiplier, making a real impact where it matters most.

**What motivates you to continue this work?**

I have always believed in leaving the world better than I found it. At my core, I cannot stand bullies, and I deeply believe that every nation that desires it has the right to self-determined democracy and sovereignty. The ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, where innocent people are losing their lives because another nation claims an illegitimate right to their land and freedoms, fuels my determination to act. As long as this threat exists, I will continue doing everything in my power to support those who are fighting for their right to exist, to choose their own destiny, and to live in peace.

This work is about standing up for freedom, justice, and human dignity. It's about using everything I have to fight for a better, fairer world. And as long as there is work to be done, I'll be there to do it.

#### **APPLY TO VOLUNTEER**

We are always looking for new instructors and we review applications on a rolling basis. Proof of military service required. *Learn more and apply on our website.*



# What our Instructors Say

## What do you wish others understood about Sabre & its work?

***"You can be the best soldier and instructor in the world but you can burn a lot of time and money trying to "break through " to set up training. Sabre has that sorted. I haven't seen other NGOs come close. The agreements are in place, accommodation and training equipment are arranged. If there is an issue, there are established networks of people to work through it. The importance of this cannot be underestimated."***

***"We listen. We've taken experience and information and negative feedback back to the drawing board to reshape how we approach certain training topics."***

***"This organisation needs to continue as it provides a vital conduit between Western instructors and the Ukrainian military."***

***"How desperately it is needed."***

*Drone- and tech-obsession are central to the civilian support environment here, and people largely ignore the infantry, or at most view them as helpless victims with no agency, instead of the backbone and most important component of any military."*

*"We've been doing this for no income and we're all motivated to help Ukraine succeed."*

***"There is no question that Sabre's training mission is effective. By being able to maintain a pool of devoted instructors whose motivation to be here is Ukrainian success and by providing a mechanism to deliver NATO level training tailored to the needs of commanders and soldiers on the ground, Sabre has caused a significant reduction in Ukraine combat casualties."***







## What is most rewarding from your time with Sabre?

*"My proudest achievement was being able to take control of certain situations and bring NATO training forward to share. I saw soldiers starting at a crawl and within a short time span, moving like Canadians in the trench lines."*

*"The most rewarding part is **hearing how our training has helped keep them alive** ... tactically and medically. It hurts deeply to hear of a prior student's death and I make it a point to try to be at every funeral but to hear the positive impact training has had makes me feel like we're doing something right."*

*"Hearing from our students that the training we gave them was useful, especially when **it has saved lives**. I feel most connected to our work with infantry soldiers who fight in the most brutal front lines. Everything we can do to empower those soldiers has impact."*

*"**Watching soldiers succeed** in the battle space."*

*"Working on the ground with fellow Sabre instructors and **seeing how our training was making a difference** with the Ukrainian military."*

**“It will also establish a template for building a more effective, multipronged response to other would-be aggressors.”**



# Looking Forward

18

## Sabre is dedicated to securing a lasting Ukrainian victory.

To achieve strategic effects, we must increase the scale of our efforts. We are seeking partners, funders, donors and sponsors for both immediate and long term support.

In the immediate term, we are committed to, and focused on, training Ukrainian defenders. In the long term, we aim to create a permanent battle school staffed by Ukrainian officers and NCOs.

This battle school will seek to drive the modernization and integration of Ukraine's training design and development while contributing to the transfer of lessons learned to allies and partners.

**Together, we can strengthen Ukrainian defenders and secure a lasting and resilient peace.**

### SUSTAIN

#### FOCUS

- basic infantry training
- light officer, NCO training

#### OPERATIONS

- current base capacity

### SCALE

#### FOCUS

- basic infantry training
- advanced officer, NCO training
- train the trainer

#### OPERATIONS

- expanded base capacity

### STABILIZE

#### FOCUS

- joint battle school staffed by Ukrainians
- capability development
- modernization & interoperability advancement

#### OPERATIONS

- dedicated base & infrastructure



## Looking to 2025

With your continued backing, in 2025 we aim to:

- Train 2,000 Ukrainian defenders.
- Grow our number of Ukrainian partners to deliver NATO-aligned training with.
- Expand our engagement of advisors to advance the development of our training services and related lessons learned.
- Secure new sponsors to provide urgently needed supplies and equipment to the defenders we work with, for both training and field use.



**Thank you for making  
our mission possible.**