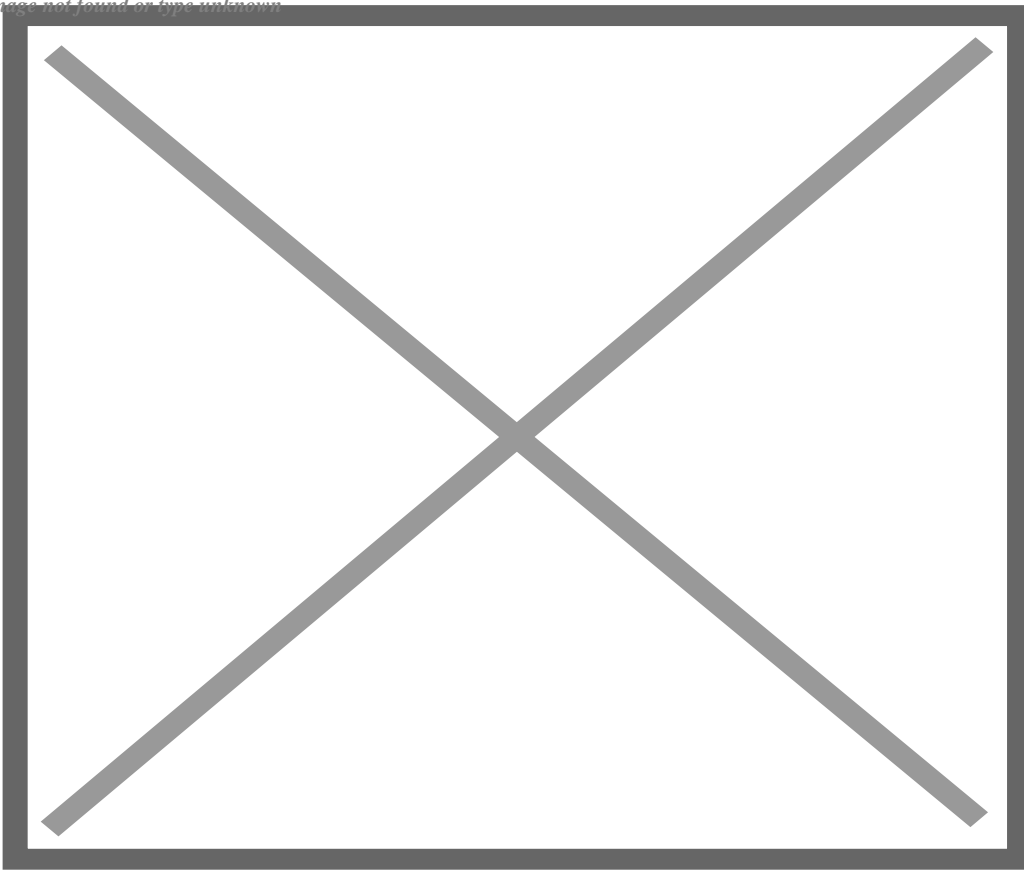


# *U.S. military veteran volunteering as mercenary in Ukraine faked battlefield heroics for fame*

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**James Vasquez, a US military veteran who reportedly faked battlefield victories as a volunteer fighter in Ukraine, is pictured in a May 2023 Twitter post. (Via Twitter)**

New York, July 19 (RHC)-- A U.S. military veteran, whose self-proclaimed battlefield heroics as a volunteer/mercenary fighter in Ukraine's war against Russia have gone viral and widely publicized by the mainstream media, has reportedly faked his stories and even lied about his military service.

Former U.S. soldier James Vasquez was one of thousands of volunteers who joined the Ukrainian side of the conflict with Russia that erupted in February 2022 amid new reports that he has never entered battlefield operations with Ukrainian armed forces.

Vasquez gained fame through dramatic social media posts purportedly from the front lines that amassed more than 400,000 followers on Twitter. He was even praised by the then U.S. congressman Adam Kinzinger, who called for Vasquez's Twitter account to be verified because "he's legit."

U.S.-based news website Business Insider unveiled in a report that Vasquez "bragged about capturing Russians and taking out tanks, was regularly interviewed by the news media, and made catchy claims including that he imagined the "punchable" Tucker Carlson when preparing for battle."

The outlet, however, cited foreign fighters as saying that it was widely known Vasquez wasn't actually taking part in front-line fighting. They alleged that he entered areas where battles had taken place, shooting videos with destroyed equipment, and claim achievements as his own.

In one instance, he claimed on Twitter that he was heading to Soledar, where intense fighting was reportedly raging, but it was later revealed that the Ukrainian army had quietly withdrawn days before the allegation.

Vasquez even lied about his military background as he claimed that he was a U.S. Army sergeant and was deployed in operations in Iraq and Kuwait, the report cited the Pentagon as saying. It turned out that he served as an electrical systems repairer in the Army Reserve and ended his stint there as a private first class, one of the Army's lowest ranks.

The accusations against Vasquez apparently began to surface especially after Sarah Ashton-Cirillo, an American volunteer who works in the media department of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, said on Twitter in March that he could not have legally gone on combat missions because he didn't have a contract with the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU).

"I met James Vasquez three times for a total of about four hours," she told Business Insider. "During our last meeting, in the presence of another person, he gave himself up and confirmed what I had known since last summer, that he was never a member of the AFU."

Citing other fighters, the report said Vasquez bragged about becoming a millionaire when the conflict ends. "James said, and I quote, 'I'm never gonna go back to work as a handyman. I'm probably never gonna have to work again after this war. I'm gonna be famous.'" one mercenary said.

Back in March, Vasquez admitted to the New York Times that he had misrepresented his military record and had been expelled from the U.S. Army. "I had to tell a million lies to get ahead," he conceded.

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<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/328896-us-military-veteran-volunteering-as-mercenary-in-ukraine-faked-battlefield-heroics-for-fame>



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