

Eliot Higgins and the Ukrainian hoax, redux

Garrick Alder

New photographic evidence shows what was missing from the hoax video questioned and dismissed in *Lobster 83*. Images of the Mariupol theatre published by the Associated Press (AP) reveal the total destruction of the area said to have sheltered uninjured survivors in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. These supposed survivors were filmed walking down a staircase – their clothes covered with a thin film of light-coloured plaster dust.

The hoax video was purportedly made on 16 March, the date on which the theatre was destroyed. The attack on the theatre is presumed by Western leaders to have been a Russian missile strike, as the Ukrainian government announced soon after the incident. Russia claims that the theatre was blown up by Ukrainian troops in a ‘false flag’ attack. There is as yet no confirmation of either the Ukrainian or the Russian version of this story.

Now we have photographic confirmation of the way in which the area above the theatre’s foyer was ripped apart by the power of the explosion. The photographs are seen in a video that was published by AP on 4 May 2022. The AP video itself is examined as part of this essay, in Appendix One.

Before proceeding, let us remind ourselves of the supposed survivors of the attack, as seen in the hoax video.



Figure 1

Figure 1 above shows three sequential frames from the questioned video. Dust-covered people inside the theatre are descending a staircase from the first floor of the building, making their way toward the theatre's front exits. It can be seen that the area from which they are descending is lit by bright sunlight, and there is no sign of smoke in the air.

The new AP photograph (Figure 2 below) was taken after the theatre was bombed, and shows the area from which those people are descending.



Figure 2

The direction of the blast is clearly shown by the wreckage it left behind. Sections of the interior structure have been blown out through the arched windows, becoming wedged against balcony balustrades (points A and B). A section of reinforced concrete wall has been broken and bent outward in the same direction (point C). Metal girders (point D) have buckled out – again, all in the same direction. The force of the blast can be judged by the fact that one of those buckled girders still has a large chunk of masonry attached to it (point E).

It is important to recognise that this is blast damage, not any subsequent fire damage. The room's painted walls are only blistered and melted at the outermost end of the room (left-hand side of the AP photo). Despite the fact that the innermost end of the room is the worst-damaged, the paint at this end of the room (right-hand side of the AP photo) is virtually untouched. This disparity shows that the explosion expanded outward in a conical path as it travelled through the room.

The dust-covered yet uninjured civilians seen in the hoax video are supposedly leaving this scene moments after the room was torn apart by the explosion, as they calmly descend the flight of stairs. Figure 3 below shows how the viewpoint of the hoax video relates to the wreckage of the room.



Figure 3

No civilians descended those stairs when the theatre was destroyed. Daylight was not shining peacefully through the theatre's three arched windows when the building was hit. It was not even possible to have recorded the video when the theatre was attacked, because the staircase opened directly onto this destroyed upper storey and the stairwell would have been instantly filled with dense, black, choking smoke. And there would have been no video anyway, because the cameraman was within metres of the destroyed room. He would have been struck – and almost certainly killed – by flying shrapnel and debris at the precise moment the blast tore through the building.¹

The idea that the cameraman would have felt the need to announce 'The bomb fell in the middle of the theatre!' (per the video's agitated voice-over, which was dubbed well after the video itself was recorded) would be absurd and even amusing, were it not so horrific and grotesque.

Due to a serious undetected fault in the reference works that were consulted in part one of this essay – namely Google Maps and Google Street

¹ It can be difficult for civilians to comprehend the aftermath of a missile strike. Here is video from 2019, showing a much less powerful weapon hitting an enclosed space many times bigger than the Mariupol theatre. The impact is an estimated 20 metres from the camera, and thick smoke fills the airport so quickly that it blocks the camera's view within five seconds. See <<https://youtu.be/WwoNVzF5asA>>.

View² – the estimated time when the hoax video was recorded (as determined in *Lobster 83*) was wrong. Street View imagery had been incorrectly orientated by Google, and did not align with the location in Mariupol that it represented. That imagery showed the theatre facing in the wrong direction. Consequently, the complex conclusions that were drawn about the time of day when the hoax video was recorded are null and void.

The Ukrainian company that provided Google Street View with the images used in *Lobster 83* was Cube Online, based in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.³ The cities of Mariupol and Kyiv are approximately 600 km apart on a map. In practice, a train journey between the two cities is just under 1,000 km and takes 14 hours. Some indication of a history of technical problems is given by Cube's own website. It has two separate pages, specifically instructing Cube's business customers what to do if photographs on Google Maps and Street View (a) show a customer's premises incorrectly⁴ or (b) provide inaccurate travel routes.⁵

When provided with digital evidence of the fault on Google Maps, a Cube Online spokesman said:

There may have been some glitches and some panoramas may temporarily not work properly. This unfortunately happens. If the panoramas are not earned correctly, and we received a signal about it, we republish them and usually everything continues to work correctly.

We accept all comments and wishes regarding the panoramas published by our company, but we will do everything only after the security restrictions imposed on the military aggression of the Russian state are lifted on the territory of Ukraine. Glory to Ukraine!⁶

The second appendix to this essay sets out the magnitude of the Google Maps

² For those unfamiliar with either Google Maps or Google Street View, a brief explanation of both is included as part of Appendix 2 at the end of this essay.

³ See <<http://eng.cubeonline3d.com/ru/>>.

⁴ See <http://eng.cubeonline3d.com/ru/kak_podat_zapros_na_udalenie/>.

⁵ See <http://eng.cubeonline3d.com/ru/nepravilnuy_marshrut/>.

⁶ This disjointed English was provided by Google's translation service, and is reproduced verbatim. The original text of the Cube spokesman's words are provided here for the scrutiny of those who can read Ukrainian:

Можливо відбулися якісь збої і деякі панорами можуть тимчасово працювати не коректно, таке на жаль буває. Ми приймаємо всі зауваження та побажання щодо панорам, опублікованих нашою компанією, але будь-що робити будемо тільки після того, як на території України будуть зняті обмеження, введені з метою безпеки, пов'язані з військовою агресією російської держави. Слава Україні!

error, and how it affected the findings made in *Lobster 83*. The press office of Google LLC did not respond when asked to explain this fault.

We are therefore left with the unsettled matter of when the video really was recorded. Part one of this essay observed that the video provides 'no indication that this is a bombed-out building at all. There is dust and debris visible, but no more so than might be dislodged by bombings in the theatre's general neighbourhood'. With that in mind, and since the civilians seen in the questioned video are also covered with a thin coating of freshly-fallen plaster dust, it may well be the case that the video was recorded soon after a nearby bombing had occurred.

Two bombings are known to have taken place near the theatre. The first was on 8 March, more than a week before the theatre was destroyed. In a tweet posted by Ukraine's Azov regiment at 6.33pm (Eastern European Time; GMT+2)⁷ the Azov regiment announced:

! ATTENTION ! A few hours ago, an enemy air raid took place at the intersection of Myru Avenue and Mariupol Trade Street. Two bombs were dropped on the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Ukrainian branch of the Red Cross. Residential buildings and a shopping center were destroyed.⁸

Since Azov are Ukrainian neo-Nazis, and were defending Mariupol against Russian forces at the time of their tweet, it is conceivable that they might have been tempted to promote untrue propaganda stories. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was therefore approached for comment on the alleged destruction of its offices. Although the situation in the Ukrainian war zone remains unclear, an ICRC spokesman confirmed that there had been heavy shelling around the ICRC's Mariupol offices. They also stated their team in Mariupol had been evacuated on March 15 (i.e. the day before the bombing of the theatre) and that: 'We can only say that, up until that point, our Mariupol office had not been directly struck.'

The best we can say of the 8 March bombing incident is that it occurred roughly where and when the Azov regiment account claimed it had occurred, give or take some emotive embellishment about the ICRC being struck at the same time. The intersection of Myru Avenue and Trade Street is about 600

⁷ See <https://twitter.com/Polk_Azov/status/1501234591872565255>.

⁸ This translation was provided by Twitter. The original Ukrainian text read as follows:

! УВАГА ! Декілька годин тому на перехресті проспекту Миру та вулиці Торгова міста Маріуполь здійснено ворожий авіаналіт. Скинуто дві бомби на установи Міжнародного Комітету Червоного Хреста та українського філіалу Червоного Хреста. Зруйновано житлові будинки та торгівельний центр.

metres from the theatre site, with an unobstructed line of sight between the two. Between the two points, and also with an unobstructed line of sight to the theatre, was a historic house which was bombed at some point before 18 April. This building stood less than 200 metres from the theatre. It has not been possible to establish exactly when it was destroyed, and it may have occurred while the theatre was already in ruins.

There may have been other bombings, as yet unreported, that occurred much closer to the theatre before it was finally destroyed on 16 March. Since the theatre was very old (built 1887 and extensively renovated in the 1950s), it's not even clear how forceful a nearby blast would have to be in order to dislodge interior plaster dust onto the people inside the building.

The saying goes that truth is the first casualty of war, and that has been the case here. Communication breaks down; information gets lost or corrupted; certainty and doubt are interchangeable; and one lone event can give rise to numerous contradictory descriptions – or go completely unrecorded. This is especially true for foreign observers, using the Internet to follow events thousands of miles away. But ironically, in this instance truth has arrived from an unexpected direction. While the time that the questioned video was recorded has lost all clarity, the photographic proof cited above is clear-cut – and definitive.

The questioned video does not relate to the reality of what happened to the area above the theatre foyer when the building was bombed. No-one would have survived a blast that could demolish the concrete walls of a confined space, let alone walked calmly out of that room afterward, unaided and uninjured. And the video itself could never have been recorded anyway, due to the cameraman's exposed proximity to the site of the explosion. The questioned video was claimed to depict the aftermath of the 16 March bombing. It does not correspond at all to the physical reality evidenced in AP's photograph of the aftermath. The questioned video is a debunked hoax.

Bellingcat was provided with the new photographic evidence, and asked to either disown or endorse the debunked Ukrainian video promoted by Eliot Higgins. Bellingcat declined to comment.

Appendix One: The role of Associated Press

Associated Press (AP) is an American-owned news agency with offices around the world, which supplies vast amounts of pre-processed material to thousands of news media outlets. From there, AP material is picked up and reproduced on professional and amateur websites. AP's coverage of the Mariupol theatre attack is relevant to this essay and deserves some analysis of its own.

On 4 May 2022, AP published a short video report, entitled 'Closer to 600 dead in Mariupol Theater attack'. This represents at least the third revision of the deaths caused by the 16 March explosion. As discussed in part one of this essay (in *Lobster* 83) the original claim was that 300 people had been killed. Later, that became 1,500. The AP video acknowledges the claim of 300 deaths, stating: 'But evidence uncovered by the Associated Press reveals closer to 600 people were killed in and around the theater on March 16th.' That assertion is simply not substantiated anywhere in the report itself. Nor is it backed up by anyone interviewed in the report.⁹

Watching the AP video, viewers might hear the '600 dead' figure and take it on trust. But AP's methodology, which it published in a little-noticed adjunct to the video, is surprising.¹⁰ AP did not strictly 'uncover' any new evidence: its report relied solely upon the words of interviewees. And it was not the spontaneous words of interviewees, either. Of the 23 people interviewed by AP, 16 were described as witnesses. These 16 witnesses include an undisclosed number of people that AP also refers to as 'survivors'. By mixing the two sets of people, AP has effectively obfuscated the number of people in each. The undifferentiated witnesses and survivors were interviewed twice. After the first interview, there were claims that upwards of 1,000 people had been killed in the theatre. One interviewee said the death toll was as high as 1,500. The 1,000 to 1,500 consensus is suspiciously close to the phantom '1,500' figure that was touted by the Ukrainian authorities immediately after the bombing. In the circumstances, the indication is that these witnesses have been influenced by the official story rather than vice versa.

AP then went away and created a computer model of the intact theatre premises. This digital reconstruction was then shown to the same interviewees and they were interviewed for a second time. After seeing AP's model, nearly all the interviewees obligingly decided there must have been 600 deaths

⁹ AP's report was published on YouTube, and can be watched at <<https://youtu.be/q6LodXlmu50>>. The video is also permanently available at <<https://tinyurl.com/Lobs84Mariupol2Note9b>> or <<https://archive.org/details/ap-closer-to-600-dead-in-mariupol-theater-attack-04-may-2022>>

¹⁰ <<https://tinyurl.com/Lobs84Mariupol2Note10>> or <<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-business-europe-donetsk-0e361756c6acc287e8974103913abfc6>>

instead. AP had effectively told the interviewees to change their minds, but why so many of them changed their minds to the same number is unknown. This wholly avoidable contamination of the interviewees undermines their credibility, rather than enhancing it. These tainted interviews are the sole basis for AP's death-toll estimate.

AP's report includes clips of interviews with just three named survivors, one of whom was only interviewed by telephone. The phone interviewee, Oksana Syomina, says that a great number of bodies remain under the rubble at the theatre site, which she describes as 'one big mass grave'. Although Ms Syomina's claims are also mentioned on another AP webpage about the Mariupol theater attack¹¹ it remains unclear how AP confirmed she (or any of the other interviewees) had genuinely been at the theatre at the time of the attack. It remains possible that she (and others) might have been repeating claims already made by news media. In any case, the brief audio clip of Ms Syomina does not corroborate AP's claim of 600 deaths. She has never made such a claim in previous interviews, either.

The notion that all AP's 'survivors' were indeed survivors is unsustainable. One of AP's three interviewees was not even near the theatre when the attack took place. Maria Kutnyakova is explicitly referred to as a survivor in the AP video. She is seen at three minutes and 43 seconds into the AP report, denouncing Russia for declaring war on ordinary Ukrainians. However, Ms Kutnyakova had previously given an interview to CNN.¹² On 29 March 2022, she had been filmed explaining that she was visiting her uncle elsewhere in Mariupol at the time of the attack. Ms Kutnyakova told CNN that she had only discovered the theatre in ruins when she returned to the site. AP's later description of Ms Kutnyakova as a survivor of the attack on the theatre is not artistic licence: it is fiction.¹³

¹¹ 'AP evidence points to 600 dead in Mariupol theater airstrike' at <<https://tinyurl.com/Lobs84MariupolNote11>> or <<https://apnews.com/article/Russia-ukraine-war-mariupol-theater-c321a196fbd568899841b506afcac7a1>>.

¹² The CNN report is permanently available at <<https://archive.org/details/mariupol-theatre-cnn-29-march-2022>>.

¹³ For what it's worth, there are intriguing hints that Ms Kutnyakova may have come into contact with local US intelligence officers before the Russian invasion. On 20 January 2022, she presented a video made by known CIA front USAID, promoting entrepreneurialism among Eastern Ukrainians. See <<https://youtu.be/CZW4qOjXYIQ>> (video archived at <<https://archive.org/details/love-mark>>). In April 2021, Ms Kutnyakova had been helping to run an 'IT hub' in Mariupol, the aim of which was to promote and assist local citizens setting up online companies. This soundly capitalist project was itself funded by USAID. See <<https://ukrainenu.com/mariupol-it-hub-hopes-to-boost-eastern-ukrainian-it-start-ups/>>.

continues at the top of note 14

AP's report contains several impressive montages of smartphone videos recorded by people who were sheltering in the theatre. From these montages it can be seen that AP's report does not contain any video recorded during the bombing, or in the aftermath of the bombing; no video recorded by people inside or outside the theatre when it was attacked; and no video recorded by people escaping from the bombing or rushing forward to help. Strangely, nor does it include the debunked Ukrainian hoax video made notorious when it was misguidedly promoted by Bellingcat's Eliot Higgins. For some reason, whoever owns that video is unwilling to promote it any further. Asked about this striking omission, an AP spokeswoman said 'Regarding the video that surfaced March 25, AP was unable to obtain the rights to it.' The spokeswoman added: 'It showed a number of people leaving the second floor landing, which AP's report also confirmed happening.'¹⁴

The only bit of AP's report that confirms anything remotely like 'a number of people leaving the second floor landing' is a brief clip of interviewee Victoria Dubovytska. Commencing at two minutes and 24 seconds into the AP report, Ms Dubovytska describes leaving an upper floor and passing the stage, with her children in tow. As can be seen from the floorplans in the AP report, the theatre's auditorium was a large enclosed space in the middle of the theatre. The cameraman who recorded the Ukrainian hoax video was standing on the staircase at the front of the theatre, and could not have seen inside the auditorium.

In all, it is difficult to know what to make of the 4 May AP report. Taking the AP interviewees at face value, there are at most two survivors on record. We know little about their ethnic backgrounds, a key factor in Ukrainian life that is seldom mentioned by Western establishment media. Mariupol is in the so-called 'Donbass' region, which comprises Luhansk and Donetsk. At least 40% of Donbass residents identify as cultural and/or ethnic Russians, which is why the two states attempted to break away from Ukraine in 2014. Other Donbass citizens are vehemently Ukrainian, and oppose the breakaway. As does Ukraine's own government, which for some years has been launching military attacks on pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass states.

The internal territorial dispute and the related low-intensity military

Note 13 continued

Nor was this Ms Kutnyakova's first brush with international fame and US-funded projects. In 2019, she was interviewed by Radio Svoboda, which is Radio Free Europe's Russian-language service. On that occasion, Radio Svoboda referred to her, rather opaquely, as 'a public activist' (громадська активістка). See full text, in Ukrainian, at <<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30282878.html>>.

¹⁴ The AP spokeswoman, Nicole Meir, was previously head of media relations at the Atlantic Council.

conflict were the main reasons that the neo-Nazi Azov regiment, ultra-loyal to the Ukrainian state, was stationed in Mariupol. This is why Russia's allegation that Ukrainian forces bombed the Mariupol theatre is not as outlandish as it sounds. Leaving that unresolved issue aside, it is fair to say that ethnic tensions in Ukraine in general, and in Mariupol in particular, could have given rise to bias in some of the statements provided to AP's reporters.

It is also fair to say that AP's handling of the Ukrainian conflict has been guided to an unascertainable degree by the Azov neo-Nazis. With the city of Mariupol under Ukrainian control while AP's story was still evolving,¹⁵ news media were heavily reliant on the Azov regiment for both material and protection. The Azov regiment is known to have used AP to circulate propaganda, including Azov-supplied photographs of the aftermath of the Mariupol theatre bombing itself.¹⁶

In the days and weeks after the AP report appeared on YouTube, its central claims spread around the planet, via the Internet. In most cases, the only change that was made to the material was to replace the headline's passive-voice 'dead' with an active form: 'killed'. As of 1 June 2022, a search of the Google News service, using the terms <Associated Press, 600 killed in Mariupol theater attack> returns 17,800 hits. The number of news platforms that picked up the story without attributing it to AP can be imagined from the fact that searching for only <600 killed in Mariupol theater attack> returns 35,600 hits – twice as many. On the broader web, a search for sites that have picked up the AP story suggests the scale of the report's global impact. <Associated Press, 600 killed in Mariupol theater attack> returns 620,000 hits. Repeating the search, but again without the words 'Associated Press', produces a staggering 1,980,000 hits. An examination of just the first 10 pages of Google's 1,980,000 hits shows that every single result is a replication of the AP story.

The veracity of AP's 4 May 2022 report is currently unknown. At present, the most reliable aspect of it appears to be the computer-generated model of the theatre's interior.¹⁷ Viewers should therefore bear in mind the warning issued by *Guardian* reporter Nick Davies, in his seminal 2008 study *Flat Earth*

¹⁵ AP's report appeared on 4 May 2022, but Mariupol did not fall until 20 May 2022.

¹⁶ One example of AP providing international media with Azov photographs is seen in the *New York Post* of 25 March 2022. See <<https://tinyurl.com/Lobs84MariupolNote16>> or <<https://nypost.com/2022/03/25/around-300-killed-in-bombing-of-mariupol-theater-marked-children-council/>>.

¹⁷ Although it must be said that one level of the computer model, as shown in the AP video, is shown and described as the theatre's third floor (at 59 seconds in) and later shown again but described as the second floor (at three minutes and 17 seconds).

News. Material provided by AP can affect media coverage on a global scale, which is why news agencies are a prime target for propaganda-makers. International news agencies including AP had, said Davies:

[T]old the world about the Millennium Bug, and the Weapons of Mass Destruction, [and] carried the myths about drugs and crime and radiation and education All these stories were accurate, in that they faithfully recorded what somebody had said; none of them was true.¹⁸

Appendix two: A map is not the territory

The first part of this essay attempted to establish the time when the hoax video was recorded, using geographical and astronomical observations. As stated in the main body of this essay, those observations have been rendered redundant by major errors in the reference works consulted, viz Google Maps and Google Street View. Consequently, it is now not possible to establish when the hoax video was recorded. This appendix shows how the incorrect imagery provided by Google Maps and Street View affected the conclusions reached in *Lobster 83*.

First, a brief note for readers unfamiliar with using Google Maps and Street View. Google Maps is a standard map, of the sort familiar from a traditional printed atlas or an A-Z street guide. North is always to the top of the user's monitor or screen, east to the right, south at the bottom and west is at the left. Google Maps is the static bedrock that underpins the highly-flexible Google Street View. Users can navigate to locations using Google Maps, then switch to Street View mode. The user can then rotate the Street View imagery to see what the location looks like in real life.

Google Maps is the most advanced online map imaging service available, and its coverage allows exploration of most of the Earth's surface, as well as some areas under the sea, such as the Great Barrier Reef. It also offers exploration of several other planets, including Venus and Mars, using imagery compiled from space probe data.¹⁹ Perhaps predictably, given the magnitude of Google's mapping projects, some famous errors have occurred. Most notably, Google Maps has erased an entire city, 'submerged' whole islands, and misplaced the iconic American landmark, Mount Rushmore.²⁰ Less conspicuous are therefore bound to happen too. *Continues on p. 13*

¹⁸ *Flat Earth News*, (London: Random House [Chatto and Windus], 2008) p. 102.

¹⁹ See <<https://www.blog.google/products/maps/space-out-planets-google-maps/>>.

²⁰ See <<https://list25.com/25-biggest-google-maps-mistakes/>>.

File info

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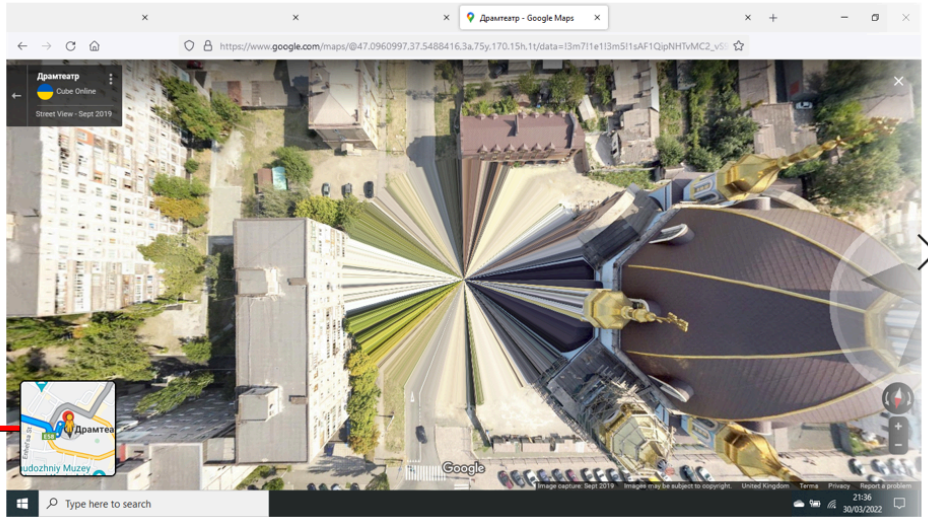
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Shot
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ISO
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Device
--

Folder path
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[Open folder](#)



File info

Filename
Screenshot (1732)

Date taken

1	June	
12		

Size
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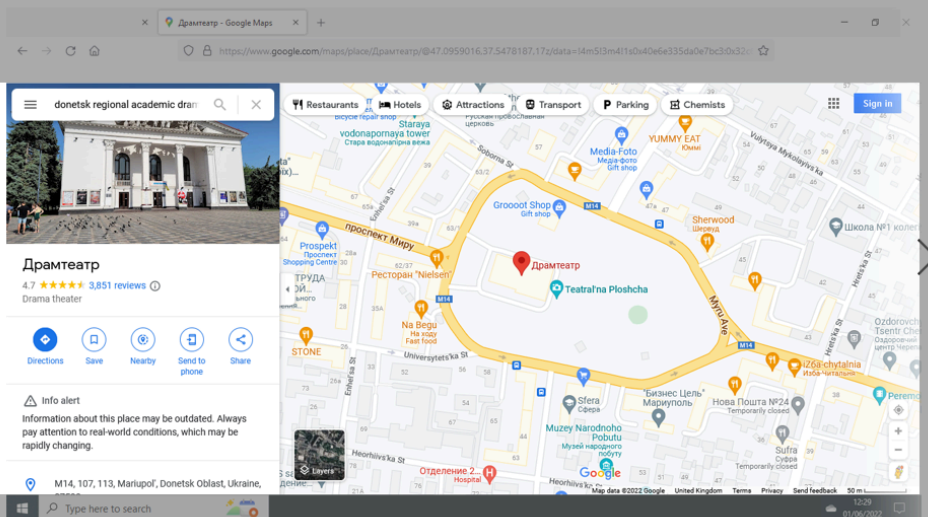
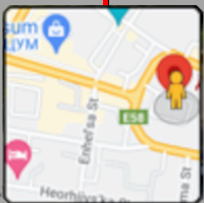
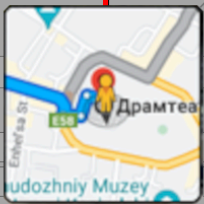
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ISO
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Device
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Folder path
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[Open folder](#)



File info

Filename
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Date taken

2	April	2022
13		16

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1.8 MB

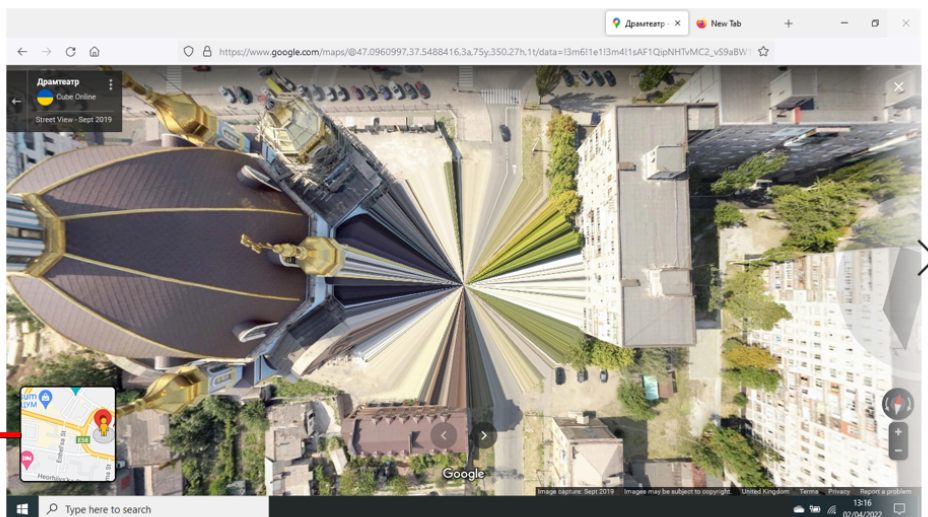
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Device
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Folder path
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[Open folder](#)



Examination of the Mariupol theatre was undertaken over a period of several days. It was found at that time that the north-western end of the theatre, and the surrounding area, were totally obscured by a strange glitch on Google Street View. Distorted aerial photographs of a nearby cathedral were presented instead. This problem was not transient and persisted throughout the examination period, making it impossible to view that end of the theatre. Satellite imagery (another Google Maps feature) was also unavailable at the time.

The illustration on p. 12 (above) shows screenshots of this glitch, taken on 30 March and 2 April 2022. In the 30 March screenshot, the viewer is looking South. In the 2 April screenshot the viewer is looking North. The orientation of the glitch has changed accordingly on each occasion. The map-based insets on the two screenshots have been enlarged and brought together in the middle of the illustration, so that they can be compared to the route map of the area provided by Google.

Whereas the North-West end of the theatre was missing from Google Street View, the South-East end of the theatre was available. What was undetectable was that the photographs supposedly depicting the South-East area of the theatre were the missing photographs of the North-West area. The fault was disguised by the fact that the North-West and South-East ends of the theatre each look directly down a long straight stretch of Myru avenue, at a 90 degree angle.

Examination of the theatre site via Google Street View continued on the basis of this error in the source material. Below are timestamped screenshots of the supposed South-East face of the theatre (taken 30 March) and the South-East stretch of Myru Avenue leading away from the theatre (taken 31 March). Both screenshots were cropped and annotated for use in *Lobster 83*. Their creation dates were were not affected.

File info

Filename
lob83 - mariupol theatre illo - FIGURE 5

Date taken

30	March	2022
21		26

Size
682.6 KB

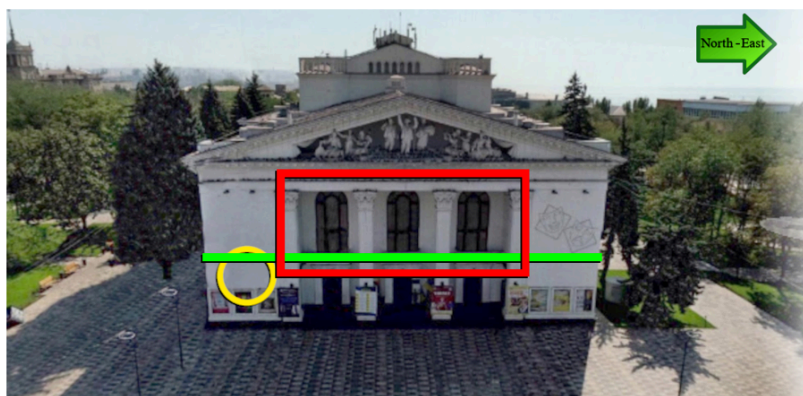
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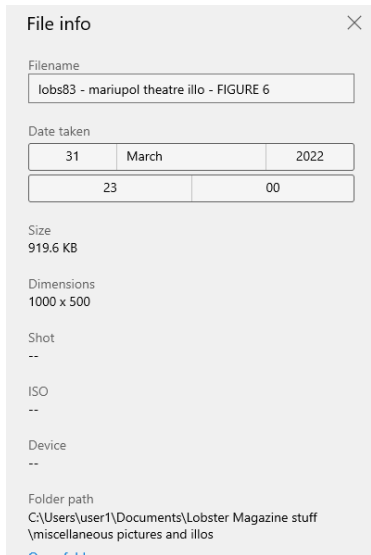
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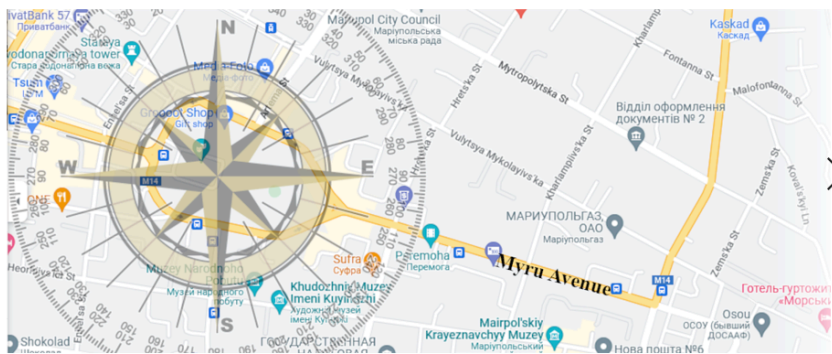
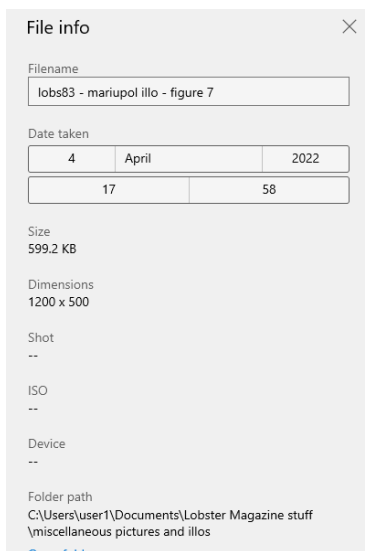
Device
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Folder path
C:\Users\user1\Documents\Lobster Magazine stuff
miscellaneous pictures and illos





On 4 April, a screenshot was taken of the South-East stretch of Myru Avenue seen on Google Maps (see below). A compass was superimposed over it in order to make observations about the directions of sunrises in February and March 2022. This detailed work was carried out in the firm belief that the South-East face of the theatre was the one shown by Google Street View.



The hardest part of the geolocation exercise undertaken in *Lobster 83* was identifying the interior areas of the theatre seen in the hoax video. These were successfully matched to the correct points on the theatre's exterior, using Google Street View photographs. What should have been the simplest part of the task – determining which way the theatre's exterior faced – was undermined by the very same Google Street View photographs.

Google did not respond to requests for comment on this technical failure. Ukrainian photo-imagery company Cube Online, Google Street View's certified

partners, confirmed that such technical failures have happened on other occasions. The fault has since been corrected, and the photographs that were taken in 2019 replaced with very different photographs taken in 2020. Google LLC relies on user reports to identify errors in its maps, which are then hand-corrected by Google employees. It is therefore likely that the bombing of the previously little-known theatre drew someone's attention to the misaligned imagery. The new photographs still show the theatre intact and functional. It is not known when Google Street View will replace them with up-to-date ones.