

# Ukraine decapitating Russian tanks due to design flaw: 'Turret literally blown off'

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Russian tanks suffer from a design flaw Ukrainian forces have been exploiting to great effect. EPA

Russian armor suffers from a design flaw that makes them susceptible to losing their tops in direct hits — a well-documented flaw Ukrainian troops are taking advantage of to smolder enemy forces.

The decapitated tanks, with turrets detached from their bodies, are victims of what military experts call the “jack-in-the-box” effect, the result pressure shockwave caused by the explosion of stored

ammunition.

"What we are witnessing with [Russian tanks](#) is a design flaw," Sam Bendett, an adviser with the defense research group Center for Naval Analyses, [told CNN](#).

"Any successful hit ... quickly ignites the ammo causing a massive explosion, and the turret is literally blown off."

Unlike modern Western battle tanks, many of the tanks fielded by the Russian army keep large stores of ammunition directly below their turrets in an auto-loading system meant to speed up the loading of the main gun.

Russian tanks suffer from the "jack-in-the-box" effect which makes them vulnerable to losing their tops in

The tanks are also smaller than their western counterparts, making it easier for exploding ammunition to cause a chain reaction with other nearby rounds, [military news site Task & Purpose reported](#). The rounds are also stored behind fewer layers of ballistic protection than in their larger, Western counterparts.

“If you get a penetration to the interior of the tank, there’s a high probability you’re going to hit something [explosive],” tank expert Steven Zaloga told the outlet.

The flaw in Russian armor isn’t new information, either. The Soviet-built T-72 tanks fielded by Saddam Hussein’s army during the first Gulf War showed the same propensity to blow their tops.

Russian tanks store large quantities of ammunition directly below their turrets, which sets them apart from modern Western battle tanks.

And while more modern Russian tanks have upgraded their armor, they all use similar loading and ammo-storage systems.

“[Western militaries] all learned from the Gulf War, and from seeing tanks killed during that time, that you have to compartmentalize the ammunition,” defense analyst Nicholas Drummond told CNN.

Ukrainian forces field many of the same Russian-designed tanks, but thus far the fighting has predominantly involved only Russian armor. It remains to be seen how Ukrainian tanks will fare in the current battle for the Donbas.