

I picked up this piece of shrapnel today in a field outside of the Ukrainian town of Chernihiv, just an hour's drive from the border with Belarus, a country that's been key to Putin's invasion. The jagged little scrap of metal is only about an inch square, and was once part of the fuselage of a powerful Russian Iskander missile. If it had hit a human body, it would have tumbled through flesh and muscle, tearing a ragged hole in the person. It'll rip through doors, fences, and roofs with ease.



That particular cruise missile didn't kill anyone, not that night. Instead it landed on the simple rural home of a man called Valentin and his family, demolishing it. Valentin's a local guy, making a living as a handyman. For anyone this would have been a traumatic event, but in Valentin's case, it was the second time his house had been leveled by a Russian missile. Indeed, he had moved to the little farm house only after his other house was destroyed. A close friend of his told me that Valentin had seriously considered taking his own life after suffering two such catastrophic losses, but that so far he had been talked out of it. So far.

