

Vladimir Putin has called an obese general out of retirement to take command of forces in Ukraine after yet another round of purges of top commanders has left him 'scraping the barrel'. The 20 stone General Pavel, 67, has been summoned from his comfortable retirement in the Moscow suburbs and told to don his specially-made army fatigues and go to the front lines of eastern Ukraine. He will now take charge of Russian special forces operating in the region after the unit's former commander was seriously injured in an artillery strike. A veteran of the Soviet Union's ill-fated invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, he was a 40 year veteran of Russia's special forces, but has let himself go considerably since retirement five years ago. He is understood to eat five meals a day and polish it all off with a litre of vodka. Since coming back to the service, he has had to have his uniform specially made and he needs to wear two sets of body armour to ensure his torso is protected. A senior intelligence source last night told the Daily Star Sunday: 'Putin is now scraping the barrel.' Most of his best and battle-hardened senior commanders have been killed or injured fighting in Ukraine so he is resorting to sending second rate officers to the front who don't last very long.

