

Ukrainian oligarch and former Zelensky backer Kolomoisky charged with attempted murder

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In an indication of intensifying conflicts within the Ukrainian ruling class, oligarch and billionaire Igor Kolomoisky has been charged in a decades-old attempted murder case as the crisis-ridden Zelensky regime abandons its former associate and financial backer amidst ongoing military setbacks.

Last week, Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office reported that "a well-known businessman suspected of legalizing property obtained fraudulently, was notified of the suspicion of having committed another crime related to the organization of a contract killing."

According to the allegations, in 2003, Kolomoisky ordered the killing of a corporate lawyer who had refused Kolomoisky's attempts to overturn an unfavorable shareholders' decision as Kolomoisky attempted to take control of the Dnipropetsstal steel plant in Zaporizhzhia.

Criminal thugs later tracked the lawyer down in the Crimean city of Feodosia and "beat the man with a metal rod and stabbed him in the chest, stomach and back, but his wife prevented the attackers from killing him and doctors managed to save his life," according to Ukrainian authorities.

Kolomoisky had already been in jail since last September, when he was arrested on charges of fraud and alleged money laundering from Ukraine's largest bank, PrivatBank.

Prior to his downfall, Kolomoisky served as a close financial backer and associate of Ukrainian president and former comedian Volodymyr Zelensky, even prior to his presidential run in 2019.

In 2014, he was an important supporter within the Ukrainian oligarchy of a Western-backed coup that overthrew elected President Viktor Yanukovich and replaced him with an anti-Russian regime that quickly moved to incorporate the country into NATO.

WSWS noted at the time: "Asin return, Kolomoisky was named head of Dnepropetrovsk Regional Administration. The region was central to the former Soviet Union's military (including nuclear and space) sectors. Kolomoisky, a metals, banking and media tycoon, is variously rated as the second or third richest person in Ukraine, with his net value estimated at up to \$6.5 billion. Co-founder of the PrivatBank, he has extensive interests in aviation, media, finance, oil, metal, petroleum and ferroalloys."

However, Kolomoisky later came into conflict with the US-aligned regime of President Petro Poroshenko, who nationalized PrivatBank after Kolomoisky and Gennadiy Bogolyubov, the co-owner of the bank, were accused of embezzling \$5.5 billion.

In the 2019 presidential elections, Kolomoisky served as the most powerful backer of Zelensky's rise and it was widely expected that PrivatBank would be eventually returned to Kolomoisky.

While Poroshenko was the favored candidate of the United States, his political support had crumbled throughout the country due to his militaristic, nationalist policies and the ongoing impoverishment of the Ukrainian economy. Zelensky easily defeated Poroshenko, winning over 73 percent of the vote.

Central to his election victory was that the Russian-speaking Zelensky campaigned at the time on a platform promising to end the civil war in Donbass that had claimed the lives of over 14,000, and criticized the far-right Ukrainian nationalism of the Poroshenko regime. For this, Zelensky was widely viewed with distrust and suspicion by the American ruling class following his landslide election.

In addition to his suspect business practices and undermining of the Poroshenko regime, Kolomoisky

made himself a target of Ukraine's Western backers when he proposed, following Zelensky's election, that the country should snub the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and default on its massive external debt.

In February 2020, under pressure from both the United States and the IMF, Zelensky began to cut ties with Kolomoisky when he replaced his then Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan with Andriy Yermak, who remains in the position to this day.

Bohdan had served as a lawyer for Kolomoisky before becoming Zelensky's chief of staff. He later fell out of Zelensky's inner circle as Kolomoisky had repeatedly pressured the Zelensky government and Ukraine's National Bank to return PrivatBank, drawing the ire of Western imperialism.

That same month, Ukrainian intelligence raided the offices of the Kolomoisky-owned television station 1+1. The search came after recordings of then-Ukrainian Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk stating that Zelensky had a "very primitive understanding of the economy" were leaked on YouTube, reportedly by 1+1 Media Group staff linked to Kolomoisky.

Last September, on the day of his first arrest for fraud, Zelensky's lone comment on the fate of his former political mentor was, "I thank Ukrainian law enforcement officials for their resolve in bringing to a just outcome each and every one of the cases that have been hindered for decades."

Whatever the motivations behind Kolomoisky's arrest for murder, it is clear that he has a long and interconnected history with both the Ukrainian oligarchy that rose to power following the mass privatization that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union as well as with Western imperialism itself.

Claims that the Western-backed Zelensky regime and its intelligence services are just now becoming aware of Kolomoisky ordering a single hit 20 years ago have no credibility. As a businessman, Kolomoisky reportedly kept a shark tank in his office to intimidate visitors and, like all oligarchs throughout the former Soviet Union, likely killed more than just a few rivals while amassing their mega fortunes. His criminal conduct in no way distinguished Kolomoisky from any other oligarch in Ukraine or, for that matter, Russia. The oligarchy in both countries emerged as a new ruling class out of the Stalinist restoration of capitalism, itself a historic crime and giant exercise in social plunder.

Kolomoisky's arrest indicates an intensification of the factional struggle within the Ukrainian ruling class in

which the US and other imperialist powers have long directly intervened. It takes place just as Russian forces are advancing in the Kharkov region. As it is clear that the country is facing a military catastrophe, the US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has now openly announced that NATO will "eventually" deploy troops to Ukraine.

More than ever before, Zelensky is now personally involved in the battlefield success of the war given that he only recently removed General Valery Zaluzhny as his commander-in-chief and replaced him with Oleksandr Syrsky, who holds the reputation as a "butcher" due to his proclivity to needlessly sacrifice his own troops in battle.

Significantly, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's surprise visit to Ukraine this week takes place a week following Kolomoisky's arrest for the attempted murder.

In March 2021, Blinken announced the official public designation of Kolomoisky as an "oligarch" due to "involvement in significant corruption." According to Blinken's declaration, "This designation reaffirms the U.S. commitment to supporting political, economic, and justice sector reforms that are key to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic path."

Accordingly, during his visit to Kiev this week Blinken agreed with the Zelensky regime that the lack of weapons is to blame for the military setbacks.

"We're rushing ammunition, armored vehicles, missiles, air defences—rushing them to get to the front lines to protect soldiers, to protect civilians," Blinken said at his press conference and announced an additional \$2 billion more in aid.

Blinken also voiced support for Zelensky to remain as president indefinitely, stating, "We're working with the government and civil society groups to shore up Ukraine's election infrastructure," Blinken said in a speech at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute on Tuesday.

Blinken stated that elections would only be held once Ukraine had regained all of its lost territory—which will likely never happen—stating, "That way, as soon as Ukrainians agree that conditions allow, all Ukrainians—all Ukrainians including those displaced by Russia's aggression—can exercise their right to vote."



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