

Former Ukrainian President Poroshenko faces charges over corruption and “high treason”

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Former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko is facing a range of criminal corruption charges opened by the country’s State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) last month.

The 11 charges were first revealed in July just prior to the parliamentary elections, suggesting that the timing of the accusations was meant to further damage the chances of Poroshenko’s already ailing European Solidarity Party. The party ended up winning just 25 seats compared to 254 for President Volodymyr Zelensky’s Servant of the People Party.

It was later revealed by Roman Truba, the head of the SBI, that Poroshenko was aware of the charges and had already submitted requests to delay questioning by the Bureau for several weeks.

The charges stem from lawsuits filed by lawyer Andriy Portnov, who previously served as a deputy in the administration of Viktor Yanukovych. The latter was toppled in the Western-backed fascist coup in 2014 that brought Poroshenko to power.

Among the multitude of charges being investigated include claims that Poroshenko—a billionaire chocolate manufacturing tycoon—evaded taxes during the sale of a television station and that he spent \$500,000 of state money on an illegal and secret personal vacation to the Maldives in January 2018.

Portnov has also claimed that Poroshenko committed high treason by staging a deliberate provocation in the Kerch Strait incident in the Azov Sea November 2018 when 24 Ukrainian sailors aggressively confronted a Russian ship and were later captured. According to Portnov, Poroshenko planned to use the subsequent declaration of martial law to postpone elections, ban opposition parties, and remain in power, a claim that

was widely circulated throughout the country prior to the first round of presidential elections in March.

The Ukrainian billionaire Sam Kislin, a former advisor to former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, traveled to Ukraine this past week to speak with Ukrainian investigators. Speaking with Ukraine’s *Strana.UA* news website, Kislin claimed that Poroshenko had siphoned \$8 billion in state funds through the state-owned Centerenergo company and the importation of coal from the United States and South Africa at inflated prices. Kislin also claimed that Poroshenko is facing criminal charges in courts in the United States but gave no details.

Poroshenko has already spoken with investigators on several occasions. Each time when leaving the building of the SBI he has been accosted by protesters. Ukrainian courts have given permission to investigators to request that Poroshenko take a lie detector test, which he has so far not consented to.

In addition to the investigation led by the SBI, this week a court in Kiev ordered Ukraine’s National Anti-Corruption Bureau to open an investigation against Poroshenko and former Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin on charges of abuse of power. The government is also investigating the mayor of Kiev, Vitaly Klitschko, a major figurehead in the 2014 coup, for “corruption.”

There is little doubt that Poroshenko, a member of the oligarchic class that enriched itself off the privatization and plundering of state assets, is a criminal. Poroshenko—who was overwhelmingly voted out of office in April—is widely hated and despised by the vast majority of the Ukrainian working-class for his blatant corruption, xenophobic nationalism and far-reaching

assaults on living standards during his time in power from 2014 to 2019.

The charges against Poroshenko give an inkling of the depth of criminality in a government that was brought to power by a coup that was fraudulently portrayed as a “democratic revolution” by the imperialist powers and the Western bourgeois media. Now, the same media that portrayed Poroshenko as a warrior of democracy and published article after article about the corruption of Yanukovych, have maintained an almost complete silence.

The Trump administration has been trying to protect the stooge in Kiev who played a critical role in the US-led anti-Russia campaign and war preparations. After the announcement of an investigation into Poroshenko, the US’s special envoy to Ukraine, Kurt Volker, held a meeting with the billionaire and other leaders of his European Solidarity Party leaders where they promised to continue to fight for “Ukraine’s interests” against Russia.

Lending his support to Poroshenko, Volker claimed during the meeting that “the last five years had been the most productive over the entire period of independence, both for building the state and for strengthening the partnership between Ukraine and the United States.”

Vesti Ukrain e has also reported that Poroshenko has been using the Washington, D.C., lobbying firm BGR Group, where Volker is a senior advisor, to help convince American lawmakers to support him should he be arrested by the Zelensky government.

The report also raised the possibility that Poroshenko may flee to Washington, as former Georgian President and American-backed stooge Mikhail Saakashvili did when he faced legal prosecution by an incoming opposition government in 2013.

But however despicable Poroshenko and however likely his corruption (and other crimes), the political forces behind the criminal proceedings against him are just as reactionary. The Zelensky government is making use of corruption charges to settle accounts within the ruling class—a well-trodden path in the fractional battles within the oligarchy in Ukraine and elsewhere.

According to *Deutsche Welle*, Andriy Bohdan, Zelensky’s chief of staff, “has long been a friend” of accuser Portnov. Furthermore, Portnov returned from exile in Russia the day after Zelensky’s inauguration to

make his accusations, further suggesting that the case against Poroshenko is part of a well-orchestrated plan by Zelensky and his supporters to crush Poroshenko and his party as a political rival and further increase their grip on the reins of state in Kiev.

In doing so, the Zelensky government is consciously appealing to and whipping up the far-right forces that helped Poroshenko come to power but have since fallen out with him and his administration.

Several news reports suggest that the fascist Azov Battalion, which played a critical role in the 2014 coup and the Ukrainian state’s war against the Russian-backed East Ukrainian separatists, are backing the criminal proceedings against Poroshenko.

During the presidential campaign earlier this year, the Azov Battalion had assaulted and accosted Poroshenko several times, forcing him to flee his own election meetings. In late July, the Azov Battalion attacked Poroshenko’s car.

In the multiple physical and verbal attacks by the Azov Battalion and similar fascist forces on Poroshenko, his corruption and the alleged failure of the Ukrainian army to sufficiently wage war against separatists in the Donbass has figured prominently.

Three members of the Azov Battalion warned in a YouTube video earlier this month that if Zelensky would not put Poroshenko behind bars they would take care to punish him for “crimes against the nation, against the army and against Ukraine”.

The Zelensky administration has conspicuously not moved against the country’s Minister of Internal Affairs Arsen Avakov, who has faced similar corruption accusations in the past but is a longtime political rival of Poroshenko. Avakov, who oversees the country’s police and has well-known ties to the Azov Battalion and others on the far right, continues to serve in Zelensky’s administration.



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