

Pentagon leaks intensify political crisis of Zelensky government

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The government of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is attempting to bolster its efforts to continue its NATO-backed proxy war against Russia amid a serious crisis caused by leaked Pentagon documents that expose the lies of both the imperialist powers and their proxies in the Ukrainian ruling class.

The contentions made by Ukrainian officials since the beginning of the war that their losses are minimal compared to Russia, that victory is just around the corner and that Crimea will be retaken by Ukraine soon provided they have enough money and weapons from the West have been conclusively disproved by the leak of classified US government documents.

On these revelations Ukrainian officials have chosen to remain largely silent or have instead attempted to spin the leaked documents as proving their case that their country was not being provided enough weapons all along.

As information from the documents first became public Ukrainian officials, such as Zelensky's Head Adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, followed the lead of the US and attempted to portray the leaks as part of a Russian disinformation campaign. Thus, on April 8, Podolyak claimed, "The aim of secret data 'leaks' is obvious: divert attention, cast doubts & mutual suspicions, sow discord. It's an ordinary game of ruse-secret services. To take open briefings, add fake info or certain parts of interceptions & publish them on social networks legalizing the 'leak'."

The fact that both Podolyak and three unnamed US officials, who told Reuters a day before on April 7 that "pro-Russian elements are likely behind the leak," were pushing the same line simultaneously ironically underlined one of the main results of the leak: that US officials were deeply involved in both the war and the day-to-day workings of the Ukrainian government.

Moreover, the leaks revealed that the US assessment of the war waged by the Ukrainian army on behalf of NATO was far less favorable than what is presented to the public in the media.

Particularly damning from a military standpoint was the revelation of the extent to which Ukraine's air defenses had been destroyed by the war. As the *New York Times* had to acknowledge, a "leaked Pentagon document puts the number of Russian fighter jets currently deployed in the Ukraine theater at 485 compared with 85 Ukrainian jets."

In regards to the upcoming counteroffensive, the Pentagon documents have revealed that any military push by Ukraine could be disastrous. In addition to having a severely weakened air force, the Ukrainian military is short on ammunition and artillery that the US cannot admittedly provide, and its assembled brigades will be equipped with a hodgepodge of US and European weapons that will not be easily repaired by Ukrainian forces.

As the veracity of the documents became undeniable, both Ukrainian officials in conjunction with US officials and their mouthpieces at the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* responded with an effort to both cover up the revelations and use them to advance calls for even more military assistance.

Last week Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, one of the most militaristic officials within an already right-wing government, responded to the leaks by claiming he had spoken with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. According to Kuleba, Blinken "reaffirmed the ironclad US support and vehemently rejected any attempts to cast doubt on Ukraine's capacity to win on the battlefield."

Days later, Kuleba demanded Western aircraft on Twitter and also called for NATO to "begin training

Ukrainian pilots to fly Western-type combat aircraft.”

The US, for its part, continues to escalate and deepen its involvement in the conflict. On Wednesday, it announced another \$325 million in new military aid for Ukraine that will include more artillery rounds and rockets for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS). In an astonishing indictment of the vast sums being wasted on the war, Ukraine has already fired 9,612 of the HIMARS rockets, with each rocket costing around \$160,000 for a total cost \$1.538 billion, according to the *Asia Times*.

No matter how many millions and billions of dollars the imperialist powers are pumping into this war, however, there is no question that the Zelensky government and the Ukrainian regime’s war effort as a whole are deeply shaken. It is estimated that a staggering 200,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died in this war already, with hundreds of thousands more injured.

These would be horrifying figures in any war, but Ukraine has only a medium-sized population by European standards. Before the war, it numbered less than 40 million, out of which over 8 million have since fled, and several million live in territories controlled by Russia. Videos and images circulating on social media suggest that mass graves with bodies of soldiers can now to be found all over the country. Clearly concerned by the political fall-out of these images, the Ukrainian government recently moved to ban the taking of images or videos at cemeteries.

As all the lies of the imperialist and Ukrainian war propaganda are blown to pieces, the fate of the Zelensky regime is becoming increasingly precarious.

In contrast to his advisers and ministers, Zelensky has remained conspicuously silent on the Pentagon leaks. Instead, he has engaged in discussions with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and French President Emmanuel Macron over the past two weeks and released a highly produced video celebrating Easter in Orthodox Christianity. He also headed out on a PR tour of the front lines in the eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka. The town is just 90 km southwest from the “meat grinder” of Bakhmut. As the Pentagon documents showed, “Ukrainian forces as of 25 February were almost operationally encircled by Russian forces in Bakhmut.”

On Tuesday, *Politico* published an article indicating that Zelensky may soon be removed based on

accusations that he had failed to adequately fight “corruption.” Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Seymour Hersh recently accused Zelensky and his entourage of embezzling \$400 million.

After quoting a number of pro-EU Ukrainian officials, *Politico* cited an unnamed “former senior US diplomat who has considerable experience.”

“We have not seen significant enough efforts to address corruption—although perhaps with one important exception. I think they really are trying to prevent diversion of any of the massive Western assistance they’re receiving. I believe they do understand the risks, if there were to be a major scandal,” the diplomat stated, hinting at Zelensky’s removal.

Referring to what he called the “civil society” forces behind the 2014 right-wing coup that toppled the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich, he said, “In their minds, there is going to be a reckoning as soon as the war ends. And I think that’s probably going to be true.” The “civil society” behind the 2014 coup largely consisted of far-right and openly neo-fascist forces. Ever since Zelensky’s coming to power in 2019, they have put immense pressure on his government. Now, they are armed with NATO weapons and deeply integrated into the military.

Statements by officials of the Zelensky regime itself indicate that they are well aware that should it fail to continue the war, it would be confronted with immense pressure. As Oleksiy Danilov openly stated in an interview just as the Pentagon leaks were emerging, any proposal of peace negotiations by Zelensky to Moscow would amount to “political suicide.”



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