

Former leading Ukrainian political operative assassinated in Spain

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Influential Ukrainian political operative Andriy Portnov was shot to death last week in a Madrid parking lot after dropping his children off at an American school located in an elite district of the Spanish capital.

Portnov was a former member of the Ukrainian parliament and deputy head in the administration of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, who was toppled in a US- and EU-backed coup in February 2014. His assassination adds another name to the long list of Russia-aligned political figures from the Ukrainian ruling class who have been killed in targeted assassinations following the full-scale outbreak of the NATO-backed proxy war between Kiev and Moscow in February 2022.

According to reports, the shooting was carried out by a thin, lone gunman wearing a blue tracksuit who may have been assisted by an accomplice riding a getaway motorbike. The killing was reportedly witnessed by both children and teachers still entering the school at the time. So far, no suspect has been detained.

A lawyer by trade, Portnov made his entry into Ukrainian politics as a parliament member within the party of Western-backed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, from 2005 until 2010. He then switched sides to join Yanukovich's administration where he would remain until 2014. He was well known for opposing the Western-backed coup that led to Yanukovich's ouster as president and the outbreak of civil war in the Donbass region.

Undoubtedly recruited to the Yanukovich government due to his political and legal skills, which aided him in gaming the Ukrainian judicial system, in 2012 Portnov set up Ukraine's national criminal code.

Following the 2014 Western-backed coup that violently removed Yanukovich from power with the

assistance of the country's far-right political forces, Portnov reportedly fled to Russia and then Austria. He later returned to Ukraine following the election of former comedian and current president Volodymyr Zelensky, who at the time was not the preferred candidate of either US or European imperialism due to his own political and business ties to Moscow.

In 2019, Portnov became involved in an initial set of charges for "high treason" against former US-backed President Poroshenko, lodged by the newly elected Zelensky government at the time, and won a number of lawsuits against rival Ukrainian media outlets who had labeled Portnov as "Pro-Russian."

In 2021, as the Zelensky government was moving sharply to the right and persecuting Russian-oriented political forces, the United States placed Portnov under sanctions for alleged human rights violations and involvement in mass corruption.

Following the outbreak of full-scale war in 2022, Portnov once again fled the country, this time ending up in Spain where he was ultimately killed.

Due to his convoluted political and personal history, which included a series of vacillations between Ukraine's pro-Western and pro-Russian ruling class political factions, it is as yet unclear exactly who is behind Portnov's murder.

Just days after his killing, Ukrainian news outlet *Ukrainska Pravda*, citing three unnamed sources, reported that Portnov had been in Kiev from May 17 to 18 to meet with "top security officials" within the Ukrainian government.

According to popular Ukrainian YouTube blogger Anatoli Shariy, Portnov was in fact meeting Zelensky and his advisors Andriy Yermak and Oleg Tatarov. Shariy later wrote that Tatarov had rapidly flown to Spain in order to handle the Ukrainian response to

Portnov's assassination and negotiate with the Spanish government.

Shariy's version of events was echoed by Ukrainian parliament member Alexander Dubinsky, a former Zelensky ally who has now been charged with "treason". Shariy stated:

Portnov was tasked with ensuring the legal purity of the elections and Zelensky's victory by finding a way to prevent potential competitors from participating in the elections by creating judicial problems for them. The task was also set to ensure the voting of "dead souls" —unaccounted for immigrants and dead civilians, missing soldiers, the diaspora.

Dubinsky claimed that Portnov had also met with Maxim Budzhansky, the deputy head of Zelensky's Servants of the People Party, and alleged that "After arriving in Spain, Portnov was immediately liquidated. The deathly silence of Zelensky, Yermak, Tatarov, and Buzhansky about Portnov's death is connected with their meetings with him, which they are trying to keep secret."

Former Zelensky advisor Alexey Arestovych likewise tied Portnov's killing to Zelensky, posting on X that "The murder of Andriy Portnov is 99% likely Zelensky preparing for elections."

Arestovych, who is preparing to challenge Zelensky in any potential future presidential elections, also wrote that he and popular Ukrainian blogger Anatoly Shariy have received death threats on Telegram associated with Zelensky's office.

Arestovych continued:

The political terror unleashed by Zelensky's regime has turned into blatant international terrorism; a Ukrainian citizen was killed on the territory of a NATO and EU country.

It will be interesting to see how Zelensky's "...dear European partners" react to this.

Whatever the true story behind the assassination,

Portnov's extrajudicial killing just days after meeting with Ukrainian officials once again exposes the imperialist lie that Ukraine is in any way a "democratic state". Zelensky, in fact, rules over a corrupt, dictatorial right-wing regime dominated by the Ukrainian oligarchy, which has a long history of settling conflicts in its ranks with violence. Far-right forces are allowed to terrorize citizens on the streets, and tens of thousands of Ukrainians have been imprisoned for opposing the war, including Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotyuk.

Ultimately, Zelensky and the entire Ukrainian ruling class are the diseased outcome of the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, that has resulted in the current mass poverty and the largest war on European soil since World War II. As the WSWS has continually warned, only the international working class can stop the war in Ukraine from further descending into a new and even more disastrous imperialist world war.



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