

Zelensky names military spy chief to lead Office of President

Jason Melanovski**7 January 2024**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky named military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov head of the Office of the President of Ukraine last Friday. Budanov is filling a powerful position that had remained vacant since November when Zelensky's previous longtime aide Andriy Yermak resigned in the wake of a massive corruption scandal.

The nomination of Budanov—a hardline CIA-trained militarist and supporter of bringing the NATO proxy war to Russian soil—comes at a pivotal time for the Zelensky administration. It is under immense pressure from the US to come to an agreement with Moscow to end the four-year-long war that has killed hundreds of thousands on both sides.

The EU, for its part, strongly opposes the Trump-backed peace plan and has been instrumental in urging Zelensky to “amend” the plan so as to sabotage it entirely and continue the carnage in order to funnel money into its domestic defense industries.

Last Wednesday, Zelensky stated that an agreement to end the war was “90 percent” ready. As the WSWS has explained, the Trump-backed plan is no way a “peace plan,” but rather a temporary agreement between the fascistic Trump government and an oligarchic Putin regime to end the war while maximizing US profits and control in the region at the expense of its EU rivals.

On Friday, Zelensky officially announced the nomination of Budanov on Telegram stating, “I had a meeting with Kyrylo Budanov and offered him the role of the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine. At this time, Ukraine needs greater focus on security issues, the development of the Defense and Security Forces of Ukraine, as well as on the diplomatic track of negotiations, and the Office of the President will primarily serve the fulfillment of these tasks of our

state.”

With a background serving in Ukraine’s special forces during the post-2014 civil war in the Donbass region, Budanov was first named the head of Ukraine’s Defense Intelligence (HUR) in 2020 and reportedly moved rapidly to prepare the country for a full-scale war with Russia and “modernize” Ukraine’s defense intelligence in close collaboration with the CIA. The *New York Times* reported in 2024 that Budanov was one of the members of the elite Unit 2245 of the Ukrainian Main Intelligence Directorate trained by the CIA. Budanov is also known to maintain direct ties with the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), the direct descendants of Ukrainian fascist Stepan Bandera’s World War II-era organization that was responsible for the murder of thousands of Jews and Poles.

Just 39 years old, Budanov has personally overseen countless numbers of adventurist sabotage operations, drone strikes and political assassinations of both Russian military and civilian figures on Russian soil. Such attacks achieved little militarily but have successfully escalated the conflict with Moscow while at the same time making it appear in Western media that Ukraine was somehow “winning” the war against Russia despite a continued loss of Ukrainian territory and soldiers at the front.

Following a Moscow court order for Budanov’s arrest on terrorism charges against Russia, Budanov replied “we’ve been killing Russians and we will keep killing Russians anywhere on the face of this world until the complete victory of Ukraine.” Budanov has repeatedly allowed the media to photograph him, sitting at his office desk, in front of a map showing a carved up Russia.

As the *Kyiv Post* bragged in May in an article

highlighting Budanov's accomplishments, thanks to Budanov:

Over 130 confirmed acts of sabotage have struck Russian territory from 2022 to 2025. These included railways blown up, fuel depots torched and military hubs hit deep behind the front lines.

On May 3, 2023, a drone exploded over the Kremlin's Senate Palace, the first such strike since World War II. In 2024 and 2025, follow-up incursions have continued, sending the clear message that any part of Russia may be attacked.

Ukrainian drone attacks surged 500 percent in 2023 and have only increased since. In May 2025, over 700 drones were launched in a single wave, reaching multiple regions, including nearly 100 near Moscow, where air defenses scrambled and airports shut down.

Think tanks and analysts have tracked a sharp rise in public anxiety in the Russian capital as air raid alerts, closed airspace and darkened streets have become part of daily life

Despite his history of seeking to continually escalate the NATO proxy war, Budanov is reportedly one of the few figures within the Ukrainian government that has maintained communications throughout the war with Moscow. Over the summer, he publicly acknowledged that Ukraine could not realistically recover all of the territory it had lost during the war.

Budanov, who had openly criticized the Zelensky administration's mobilization drives as a failure, told Ukrainian broadcaster *Suspilne* last week that Kiev needed to speak with the Kremlin. "A negotiation process is definitely needed and cannot be avoided anyway," he said.

In addition to his intelligence ties to the CIA, Budanov is also reportedly close with several figures from the Trump administration. These include the United States Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia Keith Kellogg, and Vice President JD Vance.

Within Ukraine, Budanov is also considered one of Zelensky's potential political rivals should presidential elections ever take place again in Ukraine. According to a December 2025 poll conducted by the Kiev-based think tank *Socis Center*, Budanov would finish third in the first round, behind Zelensky and former commander in chief Valery Zaluzhny. The poll also showed both Budanov and Zaluzhny defeating Zelensky in a potential runoff election.

By appointing Budanov, Zelensky has drawn himself closer to the country's Western-backed military-intelligence leadership which has never fully supported Zelensky.

Zelensky's former chief of staff Andriy Yermak was forced to resign in November just hours after investigators from Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) raided Yermak's apartment as part of \$100 million scheme known as "Operation Midas" that rocked the crisis-ridden Zelensky government.

Yermak, Ukraine's most powerful political figure next to only Zelensky, served as both Zelensky's top aide and lead negotiator in the ongoing United States-backed plan to end the ongoing NATO-backed proxy war against Russia.

Despite the raid and his resignation, Yermak has yet to be charged. Reports by Ukraine's *Weekly Mirror* indicate that he still speaks and meets regularly with Zelensky at his home.

In addition to naming Budanov to the country's most powerful non-elected position, Zelensky also made a number of other changes within his administration. He appointed Vice Prime Minister Mykhailo Fedorov to take the position of Minister of Defense and moved former Prime Minister and current Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal to head the Ministry of Energy.



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