

Ukraine's Defense Minister implicated in corruption scandal

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Ukraine's Public Anti-Corruption Council has called for the removal of Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov due to his alleged involvement in a \$100 million corruption scandal that has shaken the crisis-ridden government of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The scandal first engulfed the Zelensky regime in November of last year when staff from Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) raided the apartment of Zelensky's then chief of staff Andriy Yermak as part of an investigation into a \$100 million scheme case known as "Operation Midas."

According to the allegations, several leading members of the Ukrainian government and a close business associate of both Zelensky and Yermak were involved in an embezzlement scheme centered around Energoatom, the state nuclear company.

Energy Minister Svitlana Hrynychuk and Justice Minister Herman Halushchenko were subsequently forced to resign. Revelations indicated that they had allegedly received kickback payments worth 10 to 15 percent of contract values from contractors building fortifications on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Yermak later also resigned but has yet to be charged.

Other alleged accomplices in the scheme included former Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Chernyshov and Timur Mindich. Mindich is a close associate of Zelensky and Yermak and co-owner of Zelensky's own former TV studio Kwartal95. By the time investigators raided his apartment, Mindich, having reportedly been tipped off about the raid, had already fled for Israel.

It now appears that Umerov, who is scheduled to meet with US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff in Miami sometime this week, also took part in the embezzlement scheme and maintained close ties with Mindich as well to the drone manufacturer Fire Point, which is owned by Mindich.

Fire Point was founded in 2022, a few months after the beginning of the war, and has been producing long-range drones and cruise missiles in close cooperation with the Ukrainian Defense Ministry. Its drones have been involved in many of the long-range attacks by Ukraine on Russian territory. Fire Point has been under investigation for corrupt relations with the Defense Ministry since at least 2025. Former US Secretary Mike Pompeo joined the company's advisory board of Fire Point in November 2025.

The Anti-Corruption Council reported in a statement released last week: "the public has been presented with unverified but credible evidence of links between former Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, sanctioned businessman Tymur Mindich, and the company Fire Point." The Council called for Umerov's immediate suspension.

The statement came just days after Ukrainska Pravda released audio tapes in which Umerov and Mindich can be heard discussing selling a 33 percent share of Fire Point to foreign investors. From the context of the conversation, it is implied that Umerov himself is involved in Fire Point and would stand to financially benefit from the sale as Umerov is heard asking Mindich whether the sale "will suit us?"

Mindich can also be heard pressuring Umerov to green light the purchase of bulletproof vests from an Israeli defense contractor.

The supply contract was later canceled by Ukraine officials due to the reported low quality of the vests.

Earlier in November, Umerov denied any ties to Mindich, saying that "any attempts to link my work at the Defense Ministry with the 'influence' of certain individuals are unfounded." He admitted meeting Mindich but said any contracts related to him had been terminated. The recently released audio tapes now leave

no doubt that Umerov was clearly being deceitful about his close ties to the disgraced businessman.

The scandal has also implicated Zelensky himself. Mindich and his other close business associate, the Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoysky, were instrumental in bringing the former comedian Zelensky to power in the 2019 presidential elections. Zelensky even traveled in Mindich's personal armored car during the campaign. Zelensky also owned a high-end apartment in the same building as Mindich, where NABU investigators discovered a gold-plated bathroom that Mindich had built for himself. It is highly improbable that Zelensky, Yermak and Umerov were completely unaware of Mindich's massive embezzlement scheme involving ministers in their own government.

Ukraine has received over \$400 billion in foreign aid from the EU and US since the beginning of the NATO-backed proxy war against Russia in February 2022. While hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been killed, the "Operation Midas" scandal and countless other corruption scams over the years make apparent that the Ukrainian ruling class views the war primarily as a means to enrich itself and increase its already obscene levels of wealth.

At the last Munich Security Conference, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry bragged that its defense industry's "[p]roduction capacity has indeed grown exponentially. In 2022, it was estimated at approximately \$1 billion. A year later, it had risen to \$3–6 billion. In 2024, estimates ranged from \$10 [billion] to \$20 billion annually. In 2025, the figure reached \$35 billion, and in 2026 it is expected to total at least \$50–55 billion."

Despite the evidence of obvious massive corruption surrounding the Zelensky regime and its drone industry, Kiev's Western backers continue to demonstrate they are eager to purchase Ukrainian drones as they themselves prepare for the next stage in a broadening global conflict.

Earlier this week, Zelensky announced on Telegram that his government had "agreed to move actively towards a Drone Deal with the European Union" and tasked Umerov and Chief of the General Staff Andriy Hnatov with working out the details of the deal.

On April 29, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced that

Ukraine will receive €6 billion as part of a European Union loan to purchase drones specifically from Ukrainian manufacturers.

The first defense package under the loan "will be directed at drones from Ukraine for Ukraine—worth about €6 billion (about \$7B)."

"While Russia intensifies its aggression, Europe intensifies our support for Ukraine," Von der Leyen stated, signaling the EU's determination to prepare for full-scale war with Russia as the US continues its criminal war against Iran.

At the end of March, both Zelensky and Umerov made rapid tours of the US-aligned Gulf states following the outbreak of the war on Iran in order to secure drone deals with the oil dictatorships.

In the weeks prior, Ukrainian drone specialists were also deployed to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan, directly bringing Ukrainian forces into the imperialist war of aggression against Iran that has already killed over 1,700 civilians.

According to a report from the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, drone strikes have caused thousands of deaths worldwide, with a dramatic 4,000 percent increase in attacks between 2020 and 2024, rising from 4,525 to 19,704 in 2024.



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