

Zelensky's former chief-of-staff released from jail on \$3.2 million bail amid corruption charges

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On Monday, May 11, Andriy Yermak, the former Chief of Staff of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was officially named as a suspect by Ukraine's anti-corruption court last Monday in the massive scandal, and then formally charged and arrested on Thursday. He is charged of, among other things, being involved in a corruption scandal surrounding a \$10.5 million luxury construction project outside the Ukrainian capital Kiev (Kyiv).

Shortly before the court hearing, Yermak told reporters "I do not have any house, I only have one flat and one car." On Monday, he was released from jail after posting a \$3.2 million bail.

For years, Yermak had been one of the most influential political figures in Ukraine, dubbed by some the "shadow cardinal" behind Zelensky. Yermak and Zelensky have been close allies and friends for about 15 years.

The corruption scandal reveals the intensity of the political conflict within the Ukrainian ruling class, and the depths of its corruption amidst a war that has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian workers and youth, destroying the lives of millions more.

The scandal first engulfed the Zelensky regime in November 2025 when staff from Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) raided Yermak's apartment 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 centering around Energoatom, the state nuclear company.

Energy Minister Svitlana Hrynychuk and Justice Minister Herman Halushchenko were forced to resign. Revelations indicated that they had received kickback payments worth 10 to 15 percent of contract values from contractors building fortifications on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

In addition to Mindich, former Deputy Prime Minister

Oleksiy Chernyshov is also a well-known Zelensky friend and ally and was accused of receiving over \$1.2 million in cash by NABU.

Yermak later resigned under immense pressure from Ukraine's Western imperialist backers, but was not formally charged until now. Last year, shortly before the corruption scandal erupted, the *Financial Times*, a mouthpiece of British finance capital, published a lengthy expose on Yermak, quoting multiple US and EU officials who were upset about his political role.

However, despite his fall from grace and the naming of a new Chief of Staff, Yermak reportedly continued to play an important role in the right-wing dictatorial regime and was regularly seen leaving Zelensky's office.

Other alleged accomplices in the scheme include former Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Chernyshov and Timur Mindich. Mindich is a close Zelensky and Yermak associate and a co-owner of Zelensky's former TV studio Kvartal95.

According to the newest allegations, apart from any role he may have played in the Energoatom embezzlement, Yermak was involved in laundering funds into a luxury real estate development near Kiev valued at around \$10.5 million. The complex was reportedly owned by Mindich, Yermak, Chernyshov and a yet unnamed partner—possibly Zelensky himself or another high-ranking member of his government. Yermak allegedly also contacted an astrologer to consult on potential government appointments.

Adding to the rapidly expanding scandal, Ukraine's Public Anti-Corruption council recently called for the removal of Ukrainian Defense Minister, Rustem Umerov, for his alleged involvement with Mindich-owned drone manufacturer known as Fire Point.

As the anti-corruption council reported in a statement on the investigation, "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 statement came just days after the newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda* released audio tapes in which Umerov and Mindich can be heard discussing selling a 33 percent stake in Fire Point to foreign investors. The context of the conversation suggests that Umerov was personally involved in Fire Point and would financially benefit from the sale.

Mindich and his other close business associate, the Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoysky, were instrumental in bringing Zelensky to power in 2019. During the presidential campaign, Zelensky used Mindich's personal armored car for travel. The Ukrainian president 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. Mindich fled to Israel shortly before the NABU raid.

As the allegations have continued to snowball, it is impossible to believe that Zelensky, Yermak and Umerov, were unaware of Mindich's massive embezzlement scheme.

The current scandal has been exacerbated by the fact that last July, Zelensky—likely already aware of the massive embezzlement and robbery endemic to his government—had moved to limit the power of NABU and SAP, leading to the largest protests across the country since the beginning of the NATO-backed proxy war in February 2022.

Zelensky claimed that stripping the agency of its independence was necessary to combat “Russian influence”. At the same time, Ukraine's security services (SBU), which is aligned with Zelensky, had carried out raids of NABU to supposedly arrest Russian spies.

The move triggered both domestic outrage and intervention from its Western backers which strongly back NABU as a means to control Ukraine's domestic political apparatus. Zelensky ultimately was forced to backtrack and withdraw his attempt to take over NABU. But the very types of scandals Zelensky was seeking to head off through his control of NABU have now exploded to shake his government just as domestic support for the war is eroding.

A poll taken last summer showed that 70 percent of Ukrainians believe that their leaders use the war to enrich themselves. The latest revelations starkly confirm what workers have already understood: While the Ukrainian working class continues to die in droves at the front, the highly interconnected Ukrainian oligarchs and capitalist politicians are enriching themselves by robbing the state of hundreds of millions in a country where the average monthly salary is just \$660.

The arrest of Yermak, arguably Zelensky's closest ally, is a significant blow to Zelensky and directly raises the question of his own involvement in the corruption that permeated his government and inner circle. It also indicates that powerful sections of the Ukrainian ruling class—and its

imperialist backers—are actively moving against him.

For workers, important political conclusions flow from the ongoing corruption scandal: It demonstrates, yet again, that the war has nothing to do with the defending the interests of the people of Ukraine and “democracy.” The ruling oligarchy has placed the country's working class and youth at the disposal of the imperialist powers for a war against Russia that they had planned and prepared for many years. The goal of the imperialist powers is to plunder the resources not only of Russia but the entire former Soviet Union. While playing the role as a handmaiden of imperialism, for the Ukrainian oligarchy, too, the war is, above all, a means to further enrich itself.

But the scale of the corruption underscores that this is not simply a matter of “bad apples.” The oligarchy that now rules Ukraine—just as the oligarchy that rules Russia—has emerged from the Stalinist bureaucracy's destruction of the Soviet Union and the restoration of capitalism. This process involved the ruthless looting of state assets, the destruction of health care, education and industries, built by Soviet workers over decades, and the selling off of the country's raw materials to the highest bidders. Corruption and plunder are not simply an aberration of individuals in the Zelensky government. They constitute the historical and social basis of the entire ruling class whose social interests the Zelensky regime represents.

Workers, therefore, must oppose all attempts to exploit these blatant cases of corruption to channel support behind one or another faction of the ruling class that opposes Zelensky. A socialist opposition to the Zelensky government must be rooted in the fight to unify workers in Ukraine, Russia and Europe in a common struggle to put an end to this war, and the capitalist system as a whole.



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