Ukrainian Prosecutor General flees the country

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20 September 2026

Last Tuesday, former Ukrainian Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko fled the country just hours before his official dismissal by the right-wing government of President Volodymyr Zelensky. Kravchenko is a central figure in yet another major corruption scandal engulfing the Zelensky regime, known as “Operation Carthage.”

Kravchenko’s downfall began when the Western-backed National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAPO) announced they had uncovered a money laundering scheme from the profits of fraudulent call centers targeting primarily Russian citizens.

According to Russian news media, such Ukrainian scam call centers have exploded since the outbreak of the full scale NATO-backed proxy war with Russia and have generated billions of dollars from defrauding foreign victims. The call centers allegedly paid approximately $7,000 per month for protection to the Prosecutor General’s office. Hundreds of such call centers are operating, employing tens of thousands of people across Ukraine. Ukrainian call centers have also been implicated in the recruitment of Russian citizens in terrorist and sabotage operations.

While the head of NABU, Semen Kryvonos, claimed that the call centers were part of a “Russian subversion act”, the scale of the call center operation and the fact that the vast majority of victims are Russian citizens leaves little doubt that the call centers are operating with full knowledge of the dictatorial Zelensky government.?

Initially, Kravchenko, a Zelensky appointment, denied any involvement in the money laundering scheme and remained in his post while blaming another staff member. However, on September 7, following meetings with Zelensky, Kravchenko submitted his resignation as part of “conscious political decision” to shield the Zelensky regime. Nevertheless, he maintained his legal status as Prosecutor General until his official dismissal was approved by Ukraine’s parliament.

Then, last Monday, Kravchenko went on the offensive against NABU and SAPO, announcing that he had signed a notice of suspicion against Kryvonos for supposedly forging documents in 2009. Kravchenko also claimed to have started a second case against SAPO head Oleksandr Klymenko and alleged that the real purpose of the “Operation Carthage” investigation was to give anti-corruption investigators access to cases involving their own officials and remove him from office.

Just hours after lodging the accusations that exposed the now very public ongoing political war between the Zelensky administration and the Western-backed anti-corruption agencies, Kravchenko fled the country in a government vehicle while claiming that he was on an official trip. In a thinly-veiled attempt to distance himself from Kravchenko, Zelensky subsequently suspended Kravchenko from his post and submitted an official request to parliament for his dismissal. “This prosecutor general has only one path: to leave his post. That is exactly what I told him,” Zelensky said.

But both Ukrainian media reports and anti-corruption activists have pointed out that Kravchenko’s successful escape from the country could not have been possible without the support of the Zelensky government. It is widely believed that Zelensky allowed Kravchenko to flee in exchange for leveling accusations against NABU and SAPO officials.

On Thursday, following parliament’s official dismissal of Kravchenko, Zelensky announced Anton Kovalsky as acting prosecutor general, ending his formal association with the disgraced Kravchenko. Whatever the truth behind the scenes of the Operation Carthage scandal, it is clear that the Zelensky regime is implicated in a massive edifice of corruption schemes, that are used to enrich the Zelensky-aligned faction of the notoriously corrupt

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Ukrainian oligarchy based on the funds provided by Western imperialism.

Last November, NABU investigators raided the apartment of Zelensky's former 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 centering around Energoatom, the state nuclear company. Energy Minister Svitlana Hrynchuk and Justice Minister Herman Halushchenko were forced to resign. They had received kickback payments worth 10 to 15 percent of contract values from contractors building fortifications on Ukraine's energy infrastructure.

The corruption investigations are part of an escalating conflict within the Ukrainian ruling class and state apparatus. NABU was set up in the wake of the Western-backed 2014 coup, which triggered an eight-year-long civil war in East Ukraine, leading up to Russia's invasion in February 2022. The agency was founded in 2015 by the right-wing nationalist government of Petro Poroshenko. From the beginning, its staff was trained directly by the FBI and the European Union. For the imperialist powers, NABU is an important means to control Ukraine's domestic political apparatus.

Throughout its existence, NABU has played a key role in the ongoing conflicts within the Ukrainian oligarchy and state apparatus and in the past been strongly backed by both the EU and the United States as means to intervene directly in Ukraine's turbulent and clannish oligarchical politics. In 2020, the former Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Viktor Shokin, complained that NABU was created by order of then US Vice President Joe Biden in order to undermine Ukraine's own State Bureau of Investigation and "put there emissaries who listen to the United States."

As conflicts within the state apparatus intensified, in July of 2024, Zelensky moved to limit the power of NABU and SAPO. This triggered to the largest protests 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 closely linked to the country's far-right and aligned with Zelensky, carried out raids of NABU to arrest alleged Russian spies. As a result of an enormous domestic and foreign backlash, Zelensky was forced to backtrack and withdraw his attempt to take over NABU.

Since then, one corruption scandal after another has shaken his government, as domestic support for the war keeps eroding. A Gallup poll from June 30 found that 66 percent of Ukrainians want a negotiated end to the war as soon as possible, against 24 percent who favor fighting on until victory. A poll taken last summer showed that 70 percent of Ukrainians believe that political leaders use the war to enrich themselves. These sentiments are fully justified: While Ukrainian workers are forcibly abducted from their homes and streets to be sent to die at the front, or have to eke out a living at an average salary of $660, Ukrainian oligarchs and capitalist politicians are enriching themselves by robbing the state of hundreds of millions. Even as they are used as part of internecine conflicts within the oligarchy, the corruption scandals, ultimately, expose the class character of the war in Ukraine. It is waged not for "democracy", let alone "freedom", but as part of an imperialist redivision of the world, targeting Russia and China. Completely dependent on imperialism, the Ukrainian oligarchy is as determined to continue its subservient relationship to the EU and US as it is to enrich itself at the expense of the working class. Meanwhile, any political opponents and critics of the war, most recently the Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk, are being violently persecuted, imprisoned and silenced.

At least for now, the imperialist powers, for their part, are still supporting Zelensky over his rivals within the Ukrainian ruling class and state. Following Kravchenko's dismissal, European Commission President Ursula von ?der Leyen announced on Thursday that the EU would ?disburse €3.3 billion ($3.7 billion) to ?Ukraine to procure ?missiles and drones for its in ongoing war with Russia. "I just ?had a phone call with ?President Zelenskiy. Tomorrow (Friday) we will disburse €3.3 billion for missiles and ?drones in Ukraine," von ?der Leyen posted to X. On Friday, Ukrainian news outlet European Pravda reported that an anonymous EU diplomat had revealed that as part of the bloc's budget plan for 2028-34, Ukraine will receive approximately $115 billion.

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