



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 26, 2024

NYT Report: CIA Working in Ukraine Since 2014

In an investigative report commemorating the second anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, *The New York Times* reported that Ukraine has been depending on a decade-long secret partnership with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to garner key Russian intelligence and, more recently, conduct lethal operations during Kyiv's conflict with Moscow.

The article expounds on longstanding CIA activities in Ukraine, in which the agency funded and built up the Ukrainian military intelligence agency HUR, using it as a weapon of spying, assassinations, and other provocations targeted at Russia.



AP Images

The *Times* writes:

Toward the end of 2021, according to a senior European official, Mr. Putin was weighing whether to launch his full-scale invasion when he met with the head of one of Russia's main spy services, who told him that the CIA, together with Britain's MI6, were controlling Ukraine and turning it into a beachhead for operations against Moscow.

In another key passage, the *Times* noted:

As the partnership deepened after 2016, the Ukrainians became impatient with what they considered Washington's undue caution, and began staging assassinations and other lethal operations, which violated the terms the White House thought the Ukrainians had agreed to. Infuriated, officials in Washington threatened to cut off support, but they never did.

In other words, for more than 10 years, the CIA was building up, training, and weaponizing Ukrainian intelligence and paramilitary forces that were participating in assassinations and other provocations against pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine, against Russian forces in Crimea, and across the border into Russia itself. Put it simply, Ukrainian paramilitary forces armed, funded, and led by the United States and NATO were systematically assassinating forces backing closer relations with Russia.

The partnership, which dates back to February 2014, has supplied Ukraine with intelligence-gathering training, communications equipment, and, in the past eight years, a network of 12 spy bases built along the Russian border, the *Times* said.

Kyiv's partnership with the CIA began in 2014 when radical Ukrainian nationalist forces — notorious for their use of Nazi symbolism and their support for WWII Nazi collaborators — backed by the United States and the EU ousted Ukraine's pro-Kremlin president, Viktor Yanukovich.

In place of Yanukovich, pro-Western forces eventually installed the billionaire Petro Poroshenko.



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The CIA-Kyiv cooperation has proven immensely valuable right from the outset.

“Before the war, Ukraine provided intercepts proving Russia’s role in the 2014 downing of MH17. They also helped pursue Russians who meddled in the 2016 US election,” the *Times* claimed.

Ukraine’s Security Service head Valentyn Nalyvaichenko first sought the aid of the CIA and Britain’s MI6 to rebuild the country’s intelligence agency on February 24, 2014 — exactly eight years before the start of Russia’s military operations in Ukraine.

“That’s how it all started,” Nalyvaichenko told the *Times*.

After realizing that Ukraine’s intelligence agency could be an asset to the United States, the CIA agreed to support Ukraine in the form of communications supply and training initially, the *Times* report said.

Around 2016, the CIA began training an elite Ukrainian commando unit that captured Russian drones and gear to crack Moscow’s encryption. A critical officer aiding CIA operations was Kyrylo Budanov, now head of Ukraine’s military intelligence.

The CIA also helped train a new generation of Ukrainian spies who worked in Russia, throughout Europe, and in Cuba and other places where Russians have a considerable presence.

Per the *Times*, the details of the partnership between the Ukrainian and American intelligence agencies have been a closely kept secret for a decade.

Notably, the *Times* pointed out that the CIA had misgivings about the partnership, partly because it did not want to overstep a boundary that would provoke Russia. The CIA made clear that it would not help Ukraine stage lethal operations against Russia, the *Times* reported.

“We made a distinction between intelligence collection operations and things that go boom,” a former senior U.S. official told the paper.

However, those boundaries have since been ditched after Russia began military operations in Ukraine in February 2022, according to the *Times*.

The Biden administration permitted the CIA to provide intelligence vital for Ukraine’s lethal operations against Russia, the same report added.

Some of the intelligence included when exactly Russian forces planned to attack six Ukrainian cities and assassination plans against top Ukrainian officials, including Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky, based on the report.

“Are they pulling triggers? No,” a senior U.S. official told the *Times* of the CIA’s role in Ukraine. “Are they helping with targeting? Absolutely.”

The *Times* reported that a Ukrainian unit, the Fifth Directorate, was tasked with organizing assassinations, including one in 2016. The paper writes:

A mysterious explosion in the Russian-occupied city of Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine, ripped through an elevator carrying a senior Russian separatist commander named Arsen Pavlov, known by his nom de guerre, Motorola. The CIA soon learned that the assassins were members of the Fifth Directorate, the spy group that received CIA training. Ukraine’s domestic intelligence agency had even handed out commemorative patches to those involved, each one stitched with the word “Lift,” the British term for an elevator.



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The report details another such operation:

A team of Ukrainian agents set up an unmanned, shoulder-fired rocket launcher in a building in the occupied territories. It was directly across from the office of a rebel commander named Mikhail Tolstykh, better known as Givi. Using a remote trigger, they fired the launcher as soon as Givi entered his office, killing him, according to US and Ukrainian officials.

Since February 2022, the Ukrainian HUR has expanded its assassination activities to the whole territory of Russia, participating in the murder of Darya Dugina, a leading pro-Putin voice in the Russian media, for instance.

In fact, the CIA found its Ukrainian allies very useful in gathering huge amounts of data on Russian military and intelligence activity, so much that the HUR itself was unable to process such data, and had to submit the raw data to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, for evaluation.

In an earlier, briefer report on the CIA-Kyiv intelligence collaboration, *The Washington Post* cited a Ukrainian intelligence official's estimate that "250,000 to 300,000" Russian military/intelligence messages were being collected each day. This data was not just linked to Ukraine but covered Russian intelligence activity all over the world.

Even before February 2022, the CIA was seeking to broaden its attack on Moscow. The *Times* reports:

The relationship [with the Ukrainian HUR] was so successful that the CIA wanted to replicate it with other European intelligence services that shared a focus in countering Russia. The head of Russia House, the CIA department overseeing operations against Russia, organized a secret meeting at The Hague. There, representatives from the CIA, Britain's MI6, the HUR, the Dutch service (a critical intelligence ally) and other agencies agreed to start pooling together more of their intelligence on Russia. The result was a secret coalition against Russia — and the Ukrainians were vital members of it.

All these activities happened well before February 2022. The outbreak of full-scale war led to even more direct CIA operations in Ukraine. CIA agents were the only Americans not covered by the initial evacuation of U.S. government personnel from Ukraine, continually informing the Ukrainians about Russian military plans, including exact details of operations as they were taking place.

Put simply, the CIA has been helping direct the Russia-Ukraine conflict, making the U.S. government a de facto participant, a co-belligerent in a war with nuclear-armed Russia, despite Biden's claim that the United States is only aiding Ukraine from afar. All of these activities have taken place without ordinary Americans having the least say in the matter.

"Now these intelligence networks are increasingly at risk: If Republicans in Congress end military funding to Kyiv, the CIA may have to scale back," warns the *Times*.

On Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reacted to the revelations, stating that the United States has long been working in Ukraine to prepare operatives for subversive work against Russia.

"The work of so-called American advisers, most of whom departmentally belonged to the CIA, is well known," Peskov told TASS when asked to comment on the *Times* article published February 25.



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These people “occupied jobs in the building of the presidential administration of Ukraine ... this is not a secret,” the Kremlin spokesman added.

According to Peskov, the CIA and other U.S. agencies began functioning in Ukraine long before 2014, actively hiring people and preparing them for “subversive work against our country.”

Moscow, meanwhile, has repeatedly lambasted increased U.S. activity on Ukrainian territory, as well as Kyiv’s NATO aspirations, as threats to its national security and one of the key reasons for launching its military operation in February 2022.



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