



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 6, 2023

Report: Zelensky Bypassing Top General to Directly Control Ukrainian Military

A war-embroiled Ukraine is now enmeshed in internal power struggles, per reports.

According to the [Ukrainskaya Pravda](#) news outlet, which claimed to speak with sources close to top Ukrainian leadership, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is now giving orders directly to commanders, passing over General Valery Zaluzhny — the nation's top uniformed military official.

The report stated that Zaluzhny sometimes only learns of the military's activities by way of his subordinates. He and Zelensky have been at odds for months, and Ukraine's failed counteroffensive over the summer allegedly worsened the relationship between the two men.



Public domain
Volodymyr Zelensky

Ukrainskaya Pravda noted that the president has created “parallel tracks” of communication with high-ranking military leaders, such as with ground forces Commander Aleksandr Syrsky and Nikolay Oleshchuk, who leads the air force.

“It seems that Zelensky has two kinds of the ZSU (Ukrainian armed forces): the ‘good’ guys commanded by Syrsky and other favorites, and the ‘bad’ guys who answer to Zaluzhny,” a source with close ties to the administration said.

Moreover, Zelensky apparently is fearful of Zaluzhny's popularity. Members of Zelensky's inner circle have reportedly been trying to suppress the general's supposed political ambitions since April 2022, even pressuring him into abandoning an idea for a charity, as they believed it might lead to the formation of a new political party.

Zaluzhny expressed his dissatisfaction with civilian interference in military affairs during his meeting with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin when the latter visited Kiev last month. When Zelensky learned of that remark, he reportedly said it “didn't add trust” between the two Ukrainian men.

Regarding the Ukrainskaya Pravda report, Russia Today further notes of the tense situation between Zelensky and Zaluzhny:

Ukrainians' trust in Zaluzhny surpassed that of Zelensky even last year, the report said. A recent public opinion poll conducted for the president's office indicated that in a hypothetical election, Zelensky would lose to Zaluzhny in a second-round vote, the news outlet added.

Zaluzhny occasionally demonstrates his disdain with Zelensky's leadership, according to insiders, including when he issued a veiled rebuke to the decision to axe all regional draft bosses in the summer following a major corruption scandal.



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Shortly after hearing about the sackings at a government meeting, Zaluzhny reported a sharp drop in conscription numbers all over Ukraine, a source told the outlet.

Ukraine was supposed to have a presidential election in March, but it was canceled because elections are prohibited under the martial law imposed due to Russia's invasion. The Zelensky camp argues elections would be unfair because many soldiers are on the front lines and unable to vote, and millions of Ukrainians have fled the country.

Vitali Klitschko, the former heavyweight boxing champion who is now mayor of Kiev, recently spoke out against Zelensky, [saying](#), "People [are beginning to] see who's effective and who's not. And there were and still are a lot of expectations. Zelensky is paying for mistakes he has made."

Last winter, Zelensky accused the mayor of failing to maintain the city's bomb shelters at adequate levels.

"At some point we will no longer be any different from Russia, where everything depends on the whim of one man," Klitschko told a German news outlet.

And Zelensky may find himself increasingly at odds with Washington, as the possibility of an [interruption of the money flow to Ukraine](#) grows.

At the start of the year, the Zelensky administration was rocked by high-level resignations and allegations of corruption. What is notable is that the list of resignations went beyond top-level officials such as Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the Office of the President of Ukraine — they also included governors from several front-line regions.

On the same day that Tymoshenko submitted his resignation, he was joined by Deputy Defense Minister Vyacheslav Shapovalov and Deputy Prosecutor General Alexey Symonenko.

Meanwhile, the regional heads who were forced out of their positions were Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of Dnepropetrovsk; Alexander Starukh, governor of Zaporozhye; Yaroslav Yanushevich, governor of Kherson; and Dmitry Zhivitsky, governor of Sumy — regions close to the Russian border.

These changes followed the news of corruption charges at high levels of the Ukrainian government — news that has resulted in discussions of reform in the president's office as well as within certain law-enforcement entities in the country.

Shapovalov resigned after he was accused of buying food for the military at allegedly inflated prices — a scandal that also implicated Minister of Defense Alexei Reznikov.

And Vasily Lozinsky, deputy minister for the Development of Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure, was detained in a raid organized by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU).

As [The New American](#) reported, Zelensky purged all the regional military officials in charge of the country's conscription campaign after a series of corruption scandals. At the time, Zelensky revealed that Ukrainian authorities had launched 112 criminal investigations against officials working in territorial recruitment centers, with a total of 33 suspects, including commissars, medical commissions employees, and other officials across six regions.

Given this track record, should the U.S. continue to give Ukraine a blank check?



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