

16 Jan, 2026 18:14 / Home / Russia & FSU

Why does Zelensky keep switching defense ministers?

All of the Ukrainian leader's defense chiefs are linked by the same common thread: corruption



Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky meets Ukrainian troops being trained to command Challenger 2 tanks at a military facility in UK. © Getty Images / Andrew Matthews

Mikhail Fedorov is the latest on the conveyor belt of defense ministers to serve under Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky. None of his three predecessors have managed to turn the country's campaign against Russia around, yet it's been venal corruption – and not strategic failure – that ended all of their careers.

Zelensky's defense chiefs have all been handed an impossible task: deliver the victory promised by Zelensky to his

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Western sponsors, in a conflict against Russia that Ukraine – disadvantaged in manpower and materiel – is predetermined to lose. Furthermore, they have been tasked with managing tens of billions of dollars in foreign cash, atop a ministry plagued by graft and embezzlement.

Aleksey Reznikov (November 2021 – September 2023)

Reznikov is the only one of Zelensky’s wartime defense ministers with any military experience, having served as a commando in the Soviet Air Forces during the 1980s. Thrust into the international spotlight when Russia’s military operation began in 2022, his initial task was to secure as much foreign aid as possible, and in that regard, he succeeded.



Former Minister of Defence of Ukraine Aleksey Reznikov. © Getty Images / Kristian Tuxen Ladegaard Berg

More than €100 billion (\$115 billion) flowed into Kiev’s coffers during the first year of the conflict, with military aid accounting for roughly half of that amount, according to Germany’s Kiel Institute.

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That money soon began to disappear. Reznikov was implicated in multiple graft scandals: his ministry allegedly spent \$17.8 million procuring food for soldiers at three times the high-street price; paid a Polish company roughly \$95 million for weapons that never arrived; and bought summer jackets during wintertime for triple the list price, from a company owned by a relative of a ministry official.

After the Ukrainian military's 2023 'counteroffensive' against Russian forces ended with no territory retaken and an estimated 160,000 men lost, the writing was on the wall for Reznikov. He handed Zelensky his resignation on September 4.

Rustem Umerov (September 2023 – July 2025)

Transferred to the Defense Ministry from Ukraine's state property fund, Umerov's tenure was tainted with allegations of corruption from the outset. One month before his appointment, Ukrainian media reported that Umerov was under investigation for his role in obstructing an embezzlement probe.













Former Minister of Defence of Ukraine Rustem Umerov © Getty Images / Kevin Dietsch



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In January 2024, Umerov promised to “*eradicate corruption*” and root out “*unscrupulous participants*” from the ministry. Three weeks later, ministry officials were investigated for embezzling \$40 million intended for the purchase of mortar rounds, and the Pentagon announced that it was probing 50 cases of “*theft, fraud or corruption, and diversion*” of American military aid.

Later that year, Ukrainian media exposed a scheme in which military and civilian authorities in Kharkov Region paid millions of dollars to fake companies for the supply of non-existent building materials to construct defensive fortifications, leaving the region undefended when Russian troops rolled in.

Umerov weathered similar accusations for another year, until he was finally ousted after attempting to merge two state defense procurement agencies – a move that NATO argued would elevate the risk of further corruption.

Denis Shmigal (July 2025 – January 2026)

Taking over at the Defense Ministry after five years as Zelensky’s prime minister, Shmigal was free of the more public and venal scandals that tarred Reznikov and Umerov, and represented something of a clean slate.



Former Minister of Defense of Ukraine Denis Shmigal © Getty Images / Danylo Antoniuk

Instead, public anger at Shmigal focused on the increasing brutality of Ukraine's military conscription. Shmigal did little to reassure the public when he told parliament in July 2025 that if men simply volunteered, *"there will be no need for such a forceful mobilization."*

However, corruption would indirectly play a part in his dismissal and transfer to Ukraine's Energy Ministry. The Energy Ministry had been left leaderless since November, when it was revealed that Zelensky's associate and one-time financier, Timur Mindich, ran a \$100 million kickback scheme at nuclear operator Energoatom.

A probe by NABU, Ukraine's US-linked anti-corruption agency, led to the resignations of Justice Minister German Galushchenko and Energy Minister Svetlana Grinchuk, as well as Zelensky's chief of staff, Andrey Yermak.

Shmigal's appointment as energy minister was approved by parliament on Wednesday.



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Your comment here

Sign In Sort by Recently updated  Kevin Allon 1/20/2026 at 8:22 AM

0

Z is behaving just like Adolf before his demise.
Hopefully for Ukrainians it won't be much longer.

[Reply](#) подводный интернет-кабель 1/18/2026 at 1:23 AM

0

lol ukraine is crippled by its own anti graft department, most likely operated by brit neo nazi

[Reply](#) Kevin Allon 1/20/2026 at 8:18 AM 

0

There's two, both funded by the USA, UK and EU Commission, that alone tells you how corrupt the anti corruption agencies are.

[Reply](#) Mist 1/20/2026 at 1:38 AM

0

Even switch with all the Nazi Ukraine, the result will still remain the same where is " a century war loser " !

[Reply](#) Bruce Saunders 1/19/2026 at 10:23 PM

1

Ukraine keeps switching Defense Ministers when it should be replacing its so called President.

[Reply](#) Bill Bob 1/17/2026 at 2:37 PM

-2

After the Ukrainian military's 2023 'counteroffensive' against Russian forces ended with no territory retaken

That's a lie. During that summer Ukraine took back the land south of Orikhiv down as far as Robotyne. South of Velyka Novosilka as far as Staromaiorske, Vuhledar and nearly retook Bakhmut by getting land back as far as Andriivka and Yahidne.

You obviously can't trust RT to tell the truth. 😏

[Reply](#)

S Stelios Chimarides 1/19/2026 at 6:36 PM ↕

1

You must live in Odessa – Odessa Texas that is and don't know geography that well.

[Reply](#)

S Stelios Chimarides 1/19/2026 at 6:34 PM

1

On Ukraine side this is about collecting as much money for their Jewish leaders, whilst killing as many of Ukraine's Slavic population as possible. For Ukranian men it is about leaving the country or going AWOL where possible. For the west it is inflicting a crushing blow to Russia to rob and rape the country. The only ploy working is that the Jewish rat pack are getting richer.

[Reply](#)

C C "The Voice of Irony" W 1/19/2026 at 2:37 PM

0

Because without electricity he can't change underpants so he has to cope...

[Reply](#)

G Ghost Writer 1/19/2026 at 1:45 PM

1

Z is avoiding being hung. He is hated in Ukraine.

[Reply](#)

X xaver pan 1/19/2026 at 12:05 AM

2

Are there any influential politicians in Kiev that happen not to have german-sounding names?

[Reply](#)

C Carla Muss-Jacobs 1/18/2026 at 11:18 PM

1

«venal corruption – and not strategic failure»

Bribery, venal corruption, is, and will always be, strategic failure.

Look what happened to Judas when he accepted the bribery.

[Reply](#)

C Carla Muss-Jacobs 1/18/2026 at 11:08 PM

3

Oh no! People aren't getting paid. 😞

Aleksey Reznikov is probably cooking pasta in a villa somewhere in italy. The other two,?

[Reply](#)

🌸 lou hori 1/18/2026 at 9:48 PM

0

Jew...jew...jew...jew...

[Reply](#)

C ChewChow 1/18/2026 at 6:39 PM 0

«Nothing's lost save Honor.»

[Reply](#)

C ChewChow 1/18/2026 at 6:32 PM 0

Why?
Too many crooks spoil the broth.

[Reply](#)

🐼 steve drake 1/18/2026 at 5:55 PM 1

Zelensky looking for a fall guy whilst making sure those that previously held the post of Defense Minister are able to leave Ukraine with their suit case's stuffed full of cash.

[Reply](#)

J Jason Macher 1/18/2026 at 4:20 PM 0

Covid, Ukraine, drug trade, world wars and revolutions, climate change lies, MSM and mass idol culture lies.
Ukr was for the Great Rotsh lds sa tanic reset where Covid failed. WW3 attempt and artificial food and energy price hike to enslave nations.
1st 2nd and 3rd seals of Revelation.

It is a war for souls. And neither Trump nor Putin are the Saviour of the world, Christ is. Speak to Him directly and ask Him to take your life over. There is no true freedom or glory without the cross. Full surrender to Him. And yes they are rolling out a global surveillance cashless state without 666 vaccine d.wallet implant passport (as they tried already). Covid was the white rider. 1st seal. 'I will keep you from the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world'. The Bride who already live for Him, will be raptured first. Then tribulation martyrs will follow through their deaths. Speak to Christ directly and stop living for oneself. See Nate Reynolds testimony. All top royal and other 'elites' are satanists who have to pay homage to the other side for unimaginable fame and fortune. With children whose souls are purest and therefore most valued.

See also J Kleck You Are Exiles

[Reply](#)

E Eileen Dover 1/18/2026 at 2:41 PM 1

If the old mafia of the past had a state of it's own, it would look like ukraine today. Well, maybe more orderly.

[Reply](#)

P Patrick von Stieglitz 1/18/2026 at 5:42 AM 2

So he can keep stealing money

[Reply](#)

C SaveTheBrainBox 1/18/2026 at 4:56 AM 1

 SaysTheBronxBoy 1/16/2026 at 4:56 AM

1

He's not long for This World!
Says The BronxBoy!
Mossads biggest Blunder!


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 Zac Ristoski 1/17/2026 at 10:23 AM

4

They are all of Jewish background. Look at their faces and their surnames.

[Reply](#)

 SaysTheBronxBoy 1/18/2026 at 4:54 AM ↕

1

Be nice..! Just call them Gangsters..We'll understand;)!
Says The BronxBoy

[Reply](#)

 SaysTheBronxBoy 1/18/2026 at 4:52 AM

0

N he hasn't changed his underwear as many times times;(!
Says The Bronxboy


[Reply](#)

 dragonfruit 1/17/2026 at 11:05 AM

1

So called corruption is part of business in war against Russia, that's why Ukrainians, it's all allowed if it serves the purpose- strategic defeat of Russia, only you must not be caught otherwise you are unsuitable for the position with all consequences.

[Reply](#)

 Diego Azeta 1/17/2026 at 3:34 PM ↕

3

So called corruption is part of the social culture of Ukraine.

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 Robert 1/18/2026 at 2:48 AM ↕

1

Could Kiev weaponize corruption? It would instantly become a superpower.

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 Robert 1/18/2026 at 2:46 AM

1

He hopes each new General will give him victory? Hitler did the same thing once the war started going badly for Germany. I think it is called "desperation."


[Reply](#)

 William White 1/18/2026 at 1:33 AM

1

Cheaper to bribe a new guy than shut up the old guy. The corruption in Ukraine is massive,

[Reply](#)

 **Pete** 1/17/2026 at 6:36 PM


0

Z's thinking, 'he said he would need X dollars to do the job, and he said he needed Y dollars to do the job, ...but we'll all end up on the run soon anyway, so...

Hmmm, X or Y?

Where's my accountant?!


[Reply](#)

 **Black Jack** 1/17/2026 at 6:06 PM

0

The answer to the headline question «why does zelensky keep switching defence ministers» is right in front of everyones faces. It's because it's an assembly line. Like In a Ford car manufacturing facility. I guess zelensky has a job of using his mechanical arms to glue a Ford logo on the hood when it's ready to drive to the front lines of the car dealerships. Just like an assembly line. Like I can see the factory rolling smoothly as designed. What's this year's model going to be? A hatchback? This is pre robot analog organic robot war with brainwashed automatons and forced ones. Being encountered by humans for the first time like in command and conquer. What was that other game where it's humans vs aliens? Where you build automaton factories that generate robots you send to attack your alien foes world of Warcraft style? The ukrainian games are tower defense line games where you get a quarter everytime you kill one to build your tower. Literally the Ukraine games are not tetris but assembly lines where you command soldiers to their deaths and get a processed return

[Reply](#)

 **Misha Vlad** 1/17/2026 at 5:46 PM

1

Oh yeah, and Zelensky wants the world (me & others) to believe he is totally innocent of corruption? Come to america, I have some bridges for sale or go to Paris, they have a large metal sort-of triangle looking thing for sale. But don't try to buy a beer in Charles de Gaulle Airport unless you have a suitcase full of money.

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 **Dwight Kothmann** 1/17/2026 at 4:56 PM

4

Placing blame on others to hide the fact you're in over your head.

[Reply](#)


 **Diego Azeta** 1/17/2026 at 3:30 PM

2

Q: Why does Zelensky keep switching defense ministers?

A: The better to survive the coming consequences of his incompetence.

[Reply](#)

 **Eli Eli** 1/17/2026 at 1:43 PM

1

To mislead public & create false idea & felling as if a rotation 1 person to another will change something. Huge lie

[Reply](#)

 **Damian Hellson** 1/17/2026 at 11:58 AM

1

The defence ministers are also called the Mules that carry the bribe money across the border legally.

[Reply](#)

 **gottlieb vera** 1/17/2026 at 10:35 AM

2

How much longer is the West going to put up with these RUNTS???

[Reply](#)

 **T-Logic** 1/17/2026 at 9:41 AM

2

Because He is British Mi6 handler who wants to get rid of Putin.

- Zelensky works for MI6, Russian official believes – TASS [Dec 2025]

Why not get Zelensky kidnapped to Russia for a Case of Violence on Russia and sent to jail until death ? And ending military rule and help free and fair election in Ukraine which Zelensky doesnt want.


[Reply](#)

 **Victor** 1/17/2026 at 8:56 AM

0

Why does Zelensky keep switching defense ministers?:
Hoping to find one that works?

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 **ron sisal** 1/17/2026 at 8:18 AM

3

The brainless midget z needs to be held accountable for all the cash he has been embezzling.

[Reply](#)

 **Tom Coleman** 1/17/2026 at 4:14 AM

0

Because rational human beings are the enemy of the delusional paranoids.

[Reply](#)

 **El Calambre** 1/17/2026 at 4:11 AM

4

He needs to keep up a steady supply of scapegoats that he can blame the military disasters on.

[Reply](#)

 **Petervk** 1/17/2026 at 4:08 AM

0

Doesn't the Pentagon have the dark web ? Just pop over to the Ukraine black market and USA will find their missing weapons.

[Reply](#)

 **farangutan** 1/17/2026 at 12:34 AM 4

Changing defense ministers as often as he changes his underwear .
They all look anemic or like prison inmates .

[Reply](#)

 **Richard Corc** 1/17/2026 at 3:27 AM 1

...because... they stole too much money!

[Reply](#)

 **Petervk** 1/17/2026 at 4:06 AM 1

They all look like they could do with a shave and a bath.

[Reply](#)

 **walter dublanica** 1/17/2026 at 2:55 AM 0

None of Zelensky's commanders won the war and none are capable of winning against Russia. Time foe Ukraine to join Russia.

[Reply](#)

 **Joseph Andros** 1/17/2026 at 2:48 AM 0

A rolling stone gathers no DIRT.

[Reply](#)

 **Ray** 1/17/2026 at 1:00 AM 5

Zelensky is a fair man. He is giving all his mate a chance to fill their coffers from the aid band wagon while ordinary Ukrainians dying on the battel fields are used as lure to get more Western aid.

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