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Kyiv Post

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Long Path Ahead

As rich countries roll out COVID-19 vaccination, Ukraine struggles to get enough vaccine even for high-risk groups



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A nurse prepares an injection of the Chinese made COVID-19 vaccine Sinovac at the Sabiha Uzun Maternal Child Health Center in Ankara, Turkey on Jan. 15, 2021. In December, Ukraine bought the Sinovac vaccines for 1 million people — it's the country's first and only order of COVID-19 vaccine so far. Altogether, Ukraine can afford to vaccinate for free some 10 million people, or 25% of population, in 2021. The government's target is to vaccinate 21 million people: those with underlying conditions and essential workers.



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Адреса видавця та засновника
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Mailing address:
Kyiv Post, 68 Zhylianska St.,
Kyiv, Ukraine, 01033

Advertising
tel. +380 44 591-7788
advertising@kyivpost.com

Editorial staff
tel. +380 44 591-3344
news@kyivpost.com

Subscription & Distribution
tel. +380 44 591-3344
subscribe@kyivpost.com

Employment Advertising
tel. +380 44 591-7788
advertising@kyivpost.com

Adnan Kivan
Publisher

Brian Bonner

Executive Director/Chief Editor

Olga Rudenko | **Alyona Nevmerzhytska**
Deputy Chief Editor | Commercial Director

News Editor

Igor Kossov

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Lifestyle Editor

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Photo Editor:

Pavlo Podufalov.

Video Editor:

Austin Malloy

Staff Writers

Daryna Antoniuk, Natalia Datskevych,
Olena Goncharova, Anastasiya Lapatina,
Yana Mokhonchuk, Anna Myroniuk,
Illia Ponomarenko, Alexander Query,
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Digital marketing: Daria Vashkulat

Everything we know about Ukraine's coronavirus vaccination plans for 2021

By Anna Myroniuk
myroniuk@kyivpost.com

It has been almost one month since the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and other countries started vaccinating their populations against the novel coronavirus.

Meanwhile, Ukraine is at a standstill, expecting to receive the first batch of vaccines in February at the earliest.

Ukrainian authorities plan to first vaccinate high-risk groups who comprise half of its population or 21 million people. To meet this goal, the country needs 42 million doses — two shots for every person.

Right now, it's not clear how it will be done. Two main obstacles are money and the slow pace of negotiations.

Ukraine's government has negotiated the supply of only 9.9 million doses for the time being, enough to vaccinate 5 million people. The country has allocated funds to buy roughly 5.2 million more doses in 2021. The World Bank is expected to give Ukraine money for about 5 million doses more.

This will leave Ukraine with 10 million vaccinated citizens out of 21 million in the high-risk group. The 21 million group includes both those with underlying conditions and essential workers, like doctors and police officers.

Nor has the government been successful in clearly communicating what they are doing to get Ukrainians vaccinated. The Ministry of Health turned down the Kyiv Post's request for comment, saying negotiations on vaccine supply are strictly confidential and no additional details can be disclosed.

The Kyiv Post answers the most vital questions about nationwide vaccination, putting together all available open-source information.

Where is Ukraine getting the vaccine from?

At least 1.9 million doses will come from China. On Dec. 30, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced that it signed a \$34.5 million contract with Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac Biotech for the supply of vaccines.

Ukraine will also get 8 million doses for free from the global coronavirus vaccine alliance, COVAX. First, the ministry said Ukraine would receive 8 million doses but later fixed their mistake.

It's not clear what type of vaccine Kyiv will get — that is up to COVAX



A woman wearing a medical mask walks in the crowd in central Kyiv on Jan. 4, 2020.

to decide. It may be AstraZeneca (U.K.), Sinovac Biotech (China), or Pfizer-BioNTech (U.S.).

However, a portion of it — 210,000 out of the promised 8 million doses — will be Pfizer-produced vaccine, according to several lawmakers who cited the words of Health Minister Maksym Stepanov at a closed-door meeting on Jan. 16.

What is the difference between the vaccines?

Simply put, the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are the best because they have shown best results in clinical trials.

Pfizer's effectiveness is 95% and Moderna's is 94.1%. Both are authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. However, only Pfizer's was validated by the World Health Organization.

Both are impressively effective at preventing symptomatic cases of COVID-19, the most severe infections and deaths.

Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna use RNA or mRNA technology, a cutting edge approach to making vaccines.

RNA vaccines mimic infection using a genetic sequence of the virus. When introduced into the body, it instructs cells to make protein to counteract it, preparing the immune system to fight off the real virus.

There are other good vaccines but they proved to be less effective than the RNA versions.

The British AstraZeneca's vaccine is a more traditional vector vaccine. It uses a weakened version of a common cold virus that prompts the immune system to make antibodies and attack coronavirus infection.

While it's approved in the U.K., the FDA is still waiting for data from American trials. Confusing data from the trials indicated that AstraZeneca's vaccine could be 70% effective on average.

Russia made its own vaccine, Sputnik, which is 91.4% effective, according to the vaccine producers, the Gamaleya Research Institute. However, the Sputnik vaccine drew warnings from scientists as it was launched before the large-scale clinical trials took place.

Available vaccines also include the Chinese version made by Sinovac Biotech, which Ukraine has ordered.

Is the Chinese vaccine that Ukraine's buying any good?

It's fine but less effective than the leading vaccines.

Sinovac Biotech's vaccine is deactivated. It works by exposing the immune system to dead viral particles without risking a serious infection.

Its efficacy is questionable, ranging from 91.25% to 65.3% in trials in Turkey and Indonesia, respectively. In Brazil, researchers estimated its effectiveness at 78% in "mild to severe" cases.

However, the latest figures are less promising.

On Jan. 11, Brazilian researchers said that the effectiveness of Sinovac Biotech's vaccine is just 50.4%. The new figure included infections that were mild or asymptomatic.

When this news broke, Stepanov tried to defend the country's choice of the Chinese vaccine. He said that these figures are not final and

Ukraine is waiting to see the final report on clinical trials from all participating countries.

"Even a vaccine with over 50% effectiveness is sufficient to confirm that it works and to get approval from most medical regulators in the world," Stepanov said at a daily press briefing on Jan. 13.

The contract Ukraine signed with Sinovac Biotech stipulates that the vaccine must be at least 70% effective, he said.

"In case the company does not meet these standards and the effectiveness we agreed on, not less than 70% is not provided, the company will reimburse the money the state paid in full," he added.

When will Ukraine start vaccination?

Ukraine will likely start vaccinating its population in February.

The first batch of Sinovac Biotech's vaccine, 700,000 doses, is expected to arrive in February, according to the Ministry of Health.

But to be used, it has to be locally authorized.

Lekhim, a Ukrainian pharmaceutical company supplying the Sinovac vaccine to Ukraine, said that it plans to file the paperwork to get the vaccine registered in the country in early February.

In December, the Ukrainian parliament passed a law that shortens vaccine authorization to five days.

Ukraine expects to get the first portion of the vaccine coming from COVAX, 210,000 doses, in early February, according to Stepanov.

Who will get vaccinated first?

Doctors who treat COVID-19 patients will get the first shots. At the same time, the vaccine will go to soldiers in the Donbas, social workers and employees and residents of homes for the elderly.

Tape ties Lukashenko's KGB to Sheremet's murder

By Kyiv Post

The idea that the murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet in Kyiv could be linked to Belarus has been floated for years.

But the Jan. 4 publication of an alleged audio recording implicating the Belarusian KGB in the murder added more evidence and credibility to this version.

Belarusian-born Sheremet was blown up in his car in central Kyiv on July 20, 2016. The Belarusian government has denied involvement in the murders of Sheremet and other opponents of Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko.

Sheremet exposed the crimes of Lukashenko's regime, including political assassinations, and was preparing a new book on the subject before he was killed.

Apart from the recording, the key to the murder case could be found in Sheremet's complicated relationship with his fellow Belarusian Sergei Korotkikh, a fighter in Ukraine's Azov volunteer regiment.

On the night preceding Sheremet's murder, Korotkikh and other Azov fighters met near Sheremet's house. Korotkikh's violent background as a neo-Nazi has attracted attention since the assassination.

Korotkikh is a friend and relative of former Belarusian police officer Valery Ignatovych, who has been convicted of kidnapping Sheremet's cameraman and friend Dmitry Zavadsky, who disappeared in 2000 and is believed to be dead.

Korotkikh denied having anything to do with the murders of Zavadsky and Sheremet and insisted that Sheremet was a friend of his.

Three official suspects in the Sheremet case — Andriy Antonenko, Yulia Kuzmenko and Yana Dugar — were arrested in 2019. Critics of the investigation see the evidence against them as very weak and are calling for the release of Antonenko, who has been in custody for over a year, and Kuzmenko, who is under house arrest.

The suspects' defense attorneys argued that the new Belarusian evidence refutes the official version since there is no evidence of any links between their clients and Belarus. Ukrainian police disagree and are proceeding with the case.

KGB recording

The alleged KGB recording was published by EUobserver, a Brussels-based English-language publication, and the Belarusian People's Tribunal, an opposition group run by exiled Belarusian police officer Igor Makar.

The leaked tape was allegedly recorded on April 11, 2012, with a secret device in the Minsk office of Vadym Zaitsev, who was then head of the KGB, the Belarusian state security committee.

"We should take care of Sheremet, who is a massive pain in the ass," Zaitsev said, according to the 2012 recording. "We'll plant (a bomb) and so on and this fucking rat will be taken down in fucking pieces — legs in one direction, arms in the other



A woman lays flowers at a memorial at the place of Belarusian journalist Pavel Sheremet's murder on July 20, 2020 on Ivan Franko Street in Kyiv. Sheremet, a vehement critic of Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko, produced books and documentaries that exposed political assassinations in Belarus. He was killed in Kyiv on July 20, 2016.

direction. If everything (looks like) natural causes, it won't get into people's minds the same way."

In the recording, people alleged to be Zaitsev and other KGB officials also discuss murdering Lukashenko's other opponents — Oleg Alkayev, Vladimir Borodai and Vyacheslav Dudkin. Zaitsev said Lukashenko had authorized the planned assassinations.

Sheremet and Lukashenko

The roots of what happened in Kyiv on July 20, 2016 may be found in the period when Sheremet and his friend Zavadsky lived in Minsk.

Before starting to work with Sheremet, Zavadsky was Lukashenko's personal cameraman from 1994 to 1997.

In 1996, Sheremet became the head of Russian television channel ORT's Belarusian bureau. He was highly critical of Lukashenko's nascent dictatorship.

In 1997 Sheremet and Zavadsky were jailed for several months by the Belarusian government for crossing the Belarusian-Lithuanian border after they produced a television report on smuggling between the two countries. This incident caused a major conflict between Belarus and Russia, with Russian President Boris Yeltsin explicitly demanding the journalists' release.

At the time, the conflict caused great PR damage to Lukashenko's plans to lead a united Russian-Belarusian state that eventually failed to materialize.

Sheremet wrote a highly critical book about Lukashenko called "Accidental President." In it, he wrote that before Sheremet's arrest in 1997 Lukashenko said that law enforcers should "put an end" to the journalist. Sheremet also said on March 6, 2000 on ORT that he was prepared for death because of his conflict with Lukashenko.

"Lukashenko is a sick man, and Pavel was his personal enemy," Dmitry Zavadsky's wife Svetlana Zavadskaya told the Kyiv Post. "That is why I cannot rule out a Belarusian version."

Former Belarusian investigator Dmitry Petrushevych told the Kyiv Post that Lukashenko had reasons to order the murder of Sheremet. The late journalist was a passionate opponent of the dictator.

"When Sheremet gave me a column (on the Belarusian Partisan), his only condition was that I don't write anything good about Lukashenko," he added.

Political assassinations in Belarus

In 2000–2002, Sheremet produced two documentaries on political assassinations in Belarus.

Lukashenko's three main opponents, ex-election commission head Viktor Gonchar, ex-Interior Minister Yury Zakharenko and columnist Anatoly Krasovsky, disappeared in 1999. Sheremet's friend Zavadsky disappeared in 2000. They are believed to be dead.

In 2000, the Belarusian prosecutor general and KGB chief arrested

Dmitry Pavlichenko, a police unit chief and a loyalist of Lukashenko, in the case into the murders of the opposition leaders and Zavadsky.

They also sought to arrest Viktor Sheiman, then head of Lukashenko's security council, and then Interior Minister Yury Sivakov in the case.

However, Lukashenko fired the officials who initiated the arrest,

released Pavlichenko and appointed Sheiman as prosecutor general. The case was buried.

In 2019, a man named Yury Garavsky, who fled Belarus, claimed to be a member of Lukashenko's death squads in an interview with Deutsche Welle and admitted to

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ON THE MOVE

Advertisement



Dmytro Bondar

Horizon Capital is pleased to announce that Dmytro Bondar was promoted to Compliance Director effective January 1, 2021.

Dmytro joined Horizon Capital in June 2008 as Compliance Manager and is responsible for implementing and managing the firm's compliance monitoring and reporting program. Over his twelve years with Horizon Capital, Dmytro has incorporated compliance best practices to implement a strong compliance management system

at the firm, including both internal policies and procedures and those extending to portfolio companies. He holds an International Compliance Association (ICA) Advanced Certificate in Business Compliance.

Previously, Dmytro worked for International Finance Corporation on various advisory services projects aimed at promoting investments, developing local enterprises, and improving the business-enabling environment in Ukraine.

He holds a Master's Degree in Public Finance Management from the Kyiv National Economic University and a Specialist's Degree in Engineering from the National Technical University of Ukraine (Kyiv Polytechnic Institute). Mr. Bondar is a member of the Compliance Club of the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine.

 **Horizon Capital**

EDITORIALS

Vaccine trouble

Leave it to the Ukrainian government to make a giant mess even messier when hundreds of thousands of lives are on the line.

We get it. With the world crying out for COVID-19 vaccines, there was always going to be a mad international scramble as each country tries to secure as many doses as it can.

But Ukraine's plans to secure the vaccine have been confused, contradictory and, at times, suspicious. The Trump administration's last minute populism only made it worse.

And this is only going to aggravate Ukrainians' mistrust of the vaccine, already stoked by the government's bad prior track record. More than half the country is unwilling to vaccinate, even if it was free. That means Ukraine can look forward to no herd immunity and a soaring death toll.

At first, Ukraine was in negotiations with Pfizer, whose RNA vaccine is the most effective one in the world and the only one approved by the World Health Organization. It's also been speaking with Moderna and Johnson & Johnson, among others.

But the country lacks the regional infrastructure to keep it cold enough and Donald Trump banned its export in December, driving Ukraine into China's arms, according to the New York Times. The Chinese vaccine's clinical trial results varied widely but in Brazil, it only reached 50.4% effectiveness, a far cry from the other vaccines hitting the market.

The Chinese deal raises questions. Lekhim, a middleman, has been chosen as the exclusive distributor of vaccine from Chinese biotech firm Sinovac. Health Minister Maksym Stepanov claimed that Sinovac requested it and wouldn't have it any other way.

But when journalists called Sinovac, the company said it only does business with countries directly and that it's Ukraine's government that told it to work through Lekhim.

The price tag also raised eyebrows. According to Nashi Groshi, Ukraine paid \$18 per dose to Sinovac Biotech for a vaccine that's supposedly 50.4% effective while Moldova paid the same amount to Pfizer for a vaccine that's 95% effective.

Meanwhile, a vaccine was reportedly available for \$3 per dose from the Serum Institute of India, which has been negotiating with state company Medical Procurement of Ukraine. But Stepanov, who spent his entire tenure doing his best to destroy Medical Procurement, blamed the company for his own delays and forbade it from buying vaccines. Ukraine is reportedly negotiating with Serum Institute but the status of these negotiations is unknown.

While Ukraine can expect some free vaccines from the COVAX program, they will not be enough to reach 65-70% of the population that WHO says is needed for herd immunity.

And the government's disorganized flailing, confused messages to the public and obstinate folding of its arms whenever someone asks a question only adds credibility to the anti-vaxxers, who have the ear of more than half of Ukraine.

Ukraine's moment

Like a high school kid stuck on a midterm project, Ukraine's leadership has been delaying the implementation of reforms, looking for reasons to dodge responsibility.

It's time to end that. With the new U.S president in office, Ukraine needs to cut the slacking and deliver results. If Ukraine wants to be treated as a reliable partner, worthy of foreign assistance, Ukraine needs to begin acting accordingly.

Ukraine's pro-Western politicians and anti-corruption activists have at times been overly enthusiastic about the election of Joe Biden. It seems as if with Biden, as the new U.S. president, Ukraine will suddenly overcome its problems all at once.

Of course, the arrival of Biden is welcome -- President Donald Trump had notoriously little sympathy for Ukraine.

However, Ukraine's ongoing problems weren't caused by Trump and it's not up to Biden to fix them. Hoping that a foreign leader will come to Ukraine to fix the country's corrupt judiciary is naïve and unfair.

Ukraine has its president, and he needs to start delivering on his promises.

It was President Volodymyr Zelensky, not Biden, who promised to target corruption, reform Ukraine's judiciary and put checks on the country's oligarchs.

These promises led Zelensky and his party to a landslide victory during the 2019 parliamentary elections.

Today, almost all top government officials are appointed by Zelensky. However, problems mount, while success looks bleak.

The Constitutional Court remains in the hands of dubious judges with questionable ties, who hold Ukraine hostage in their political games.

The prosecutor general, nominated by Zelensky, has been sabotaging anti-corruption cases, although she fiercely denies it.

Oligarchs keep fleecing the nation, while the medical procurement during a deadly pandemic is flagged as being both questionable and poorly executed.

Ukraine has a lot of work ahead. Zelensky needs to implement the much-needed judicial reform, his prosecutor general needs to start charging corrupt officials and businessmen, while the government needs to stop colluding with oligarchs and make accountability the number one priority for government officials.

This shouldn't depend on the nametag in the Oval Office.

It's not a priority for the new U.S. administration to clean up Ukraine's mess. It should be Ukraine's priority.

However, if Ukrainian politicians were looking for a sign to begin delivering on their promises, this shall be it. The U.S. will support democracy, human rights and reforms in Ukraine, yet it's up to Ukraine to support them as well.

NEWS ITEM:

Oleksandr Tupytsky, chairman of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine, has been refused entry to the building of the court. Tupytsky said on Jan. 19 that it's illegal to deny him entry into the premises. On Dec. 29, President Volodymyr Zelensky ordered to suspend Tupytsky until the end of February for being charged for a criminal offense. The President's Office stated that it has nothing to do with Tupytsky's ban from entry to the building.



NEWS ITEM:

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny released a video investigation that alleges that Russian President Vladimir Putin owns an extravagant palace near the Black Sea. The investigation alleges that the construction cost of the palace is at least \$1.37 billion. The money allegedly came from state-owned companies and Putin's wealthy friends. Navalny described this as "the largest bribe in history." Putin's spokesman denied that the palace belongs to Putin. Ukraine had a similar corruption case, when news website Ukrainskaya Pravda in 2010-2012 revealed the lavish Mezhyhirya residence which belonged to then-President Viktor Yanukovych. After the Euro-Maidan Revolution ousted Yanukovych from power in 2014, Mezhyhirya was turned into a museum of corruption.

NEWS ITEM:

Starting from Jan. 16, all private businesses — including grocery stores and cafes — must provide their services to clients in Ukrainian. The latest changes are part of the ongoing implementation of Ukraine's language law adopted under ex-President Petro Poroshenko in April 2019. The law, however, allows businesses to switch to another language at the client's request. Meanwhile, pro-Russian politicians like Viktor Medvedchuk and Yuriy Boyko have repeatedly claimed that the current government is discriminating the Russian language in Ukraine.



NEWS ITEM:

Ukraine hasn't yet obtained any COVID-19 vaccines and, thus, didn't start mass vaccination. Ukrainian authorities claim that the first batch of vaccines will be shipped to Ukraine in March or later. Deflecting criticism at a Jan. 18 briefing, Health Minister Maksym Stepanov said that "even some developed countries haven't yet started vaccination — for instance, Japan." Japan has been recently reporting about 6,000 new daily COVID-19 cases, about the same as in Ukraine. However, Japan has the population of 126 million people, more than four times that of Ukraine.

See these features online at kyivpost.com

Ukraine's Friend & Foe Of The Week



Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State nominee
America's new top diplomat delivered quite a speech during his confirmation hearing on Jan. 19. Blinken is ready to go tough on Russia, provide Ukraine's military with lethal weapons and help Kyiv combat corruption.



Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs
From Borrell's perspective, Russia's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline is just a "private business project," so there's nothing Brussels can do about it. Mindful of the enormous effort to promote the Russian pipeline in Europe, we're not buying Borrell's words.

Feel strongly about an issue? Agree or disagree with editorial positions in this newspaper?

The Kyiv Post welcomes letters to the editors and opinion pieces, usually 800 to 1,000 words in length. Please email all correspondence to chief editor Brian Bonner, at bonner@kyivpost.com. All correspondence must include an email address and contact phone number for verification.

Experts: Biden administration won't magically solve Ukraine's problems

By Anastasiia Lapatina
lapatina@kyivpost.com

As Donald and Melania Trump were saying their last goodbye to the White House on Jan. 20, the world froze waiting for Joe Biden's inauguration; some with a sense of relief, and some with anger.

After a strained relationship with Trump's administration, Ukraine now expects a significantly brighter future with Biden, but only if Kyiv takes a proactive approach at fighting its own battles.

This was the conclusion during the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine discussion panel, which focused on the potential relations between Ukraine and the U.S. under the Biden administration.

The panel was joined by lawyer and President Volodymyr Zelensky's non-staff adviser Andrew Mac, President of the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Nadia McConnell, Kyiv Post's chief editor Brian Bonner, Deputy Director of Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center Melinda Haring, and political consultant Brian Mefford; moderated by Andy Hunder.

While the five panel experts were optimistic, all have also warned that there will be no honeymoon period between the two countries if Ukraine fails to fight its oligarchs and Russian influence.

"Ukraine cannot count on the United States or any foreign power to take care of its problems," said Bonner.

He believes Ukraine has to finally indict officials and oligarchs suspected of large-scale corruption and money laundering, such as the head of Ukraine's Constitutional Court Oleksandr Tupytysky and billionaire Ihor Kolomoisky.

Kolomoisky, one of Ukraine's most notorious oligarchs, has been accused of financial crimes by the U.S. Justice Department, with a possibility of criminal charges looming over him. Amidst all that, Ukraine has pressed no charges against Kolomoisky and his partner Gennadiy Bogolyubov, who allegedly stole \$5.5 billion from their PrivatBank before it was nationalized in 2016.

"If Ukraine is willing to fight corruption... Ukraine needs to copy-



Joe Biden (L) is sworn in as the 46th U.S. President by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts (R) on Jan. 20, 2021, at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

paste civil forfeiture accusations against Kolomoisky and take them to a Ukrainian court," Bonner said. "The evidence is clear, the evidence is abundant."

Ignoring big actors like Kolomoisky while going after minor corruption is "what the (ex-President Viktor) Yanukovich era people did," agreed Zelensky's non-staff adviser Andrew Mac.

Political consultant Brian Mefford is certain that sanctions against Russia and military support will continue, but he also highlights that it is corruption that has historically held Ukraine back in its progress towards the European Union.

Zelensky's thin reform record can threaten possible diplomatic progress between the two countries,

despite the Biden administration having a lot of expertise in Ukraine, said Melinda Haring, deputy director of Eurasia Center of the Atlantic Council think tank.

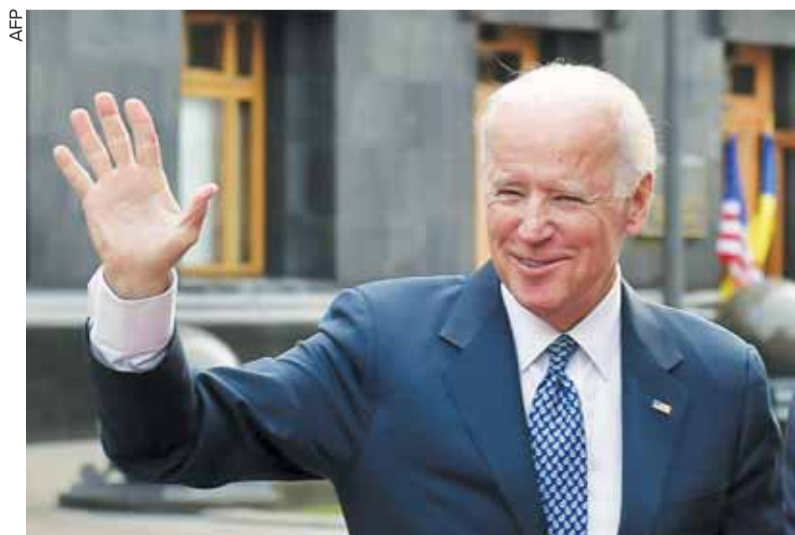
"There is a lot of interest in Ukraine and it's a personal priority for the new president," Haring said, emphasizing that politicians in Kyiv shouldn't be misled to believe they can get away with stalling reforms.

Haring also cautioned against possible tensions with Europe, where Ukraine has looked for support in its defense against Russian aggression.

"The Europeans, particularly France and Germany, are going to want a stronger relationship with Russia, and (Secretary of State nominee Antony) Blinken is going to be sensitive to those things," she said. "He is playing a bigger game."

"I'm sure our relations will be enhanced," Zelensky tweeted, minutes after Biden took oath as the 46th U.S. president.

While the arrival of Biden is good news for Ukraine, it will be up to Zelensky and his administration to seize the opportunities available to Ukraine under the new American president, agreed the panelists.



Then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden waves to people gathered ahead of his meeting with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv on Dec. 7, 2015.

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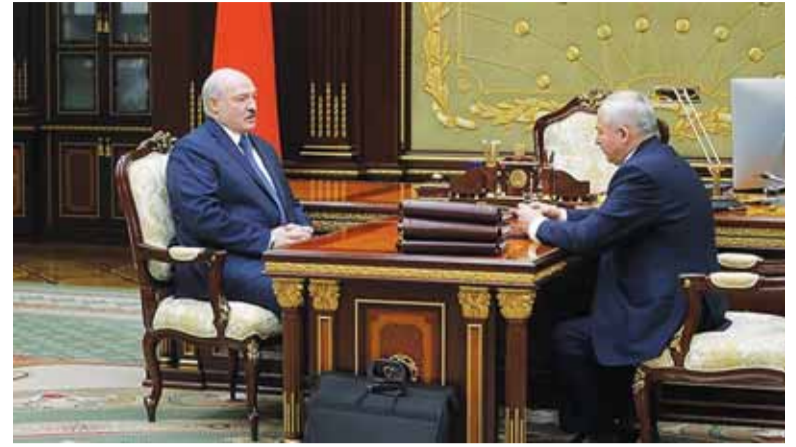
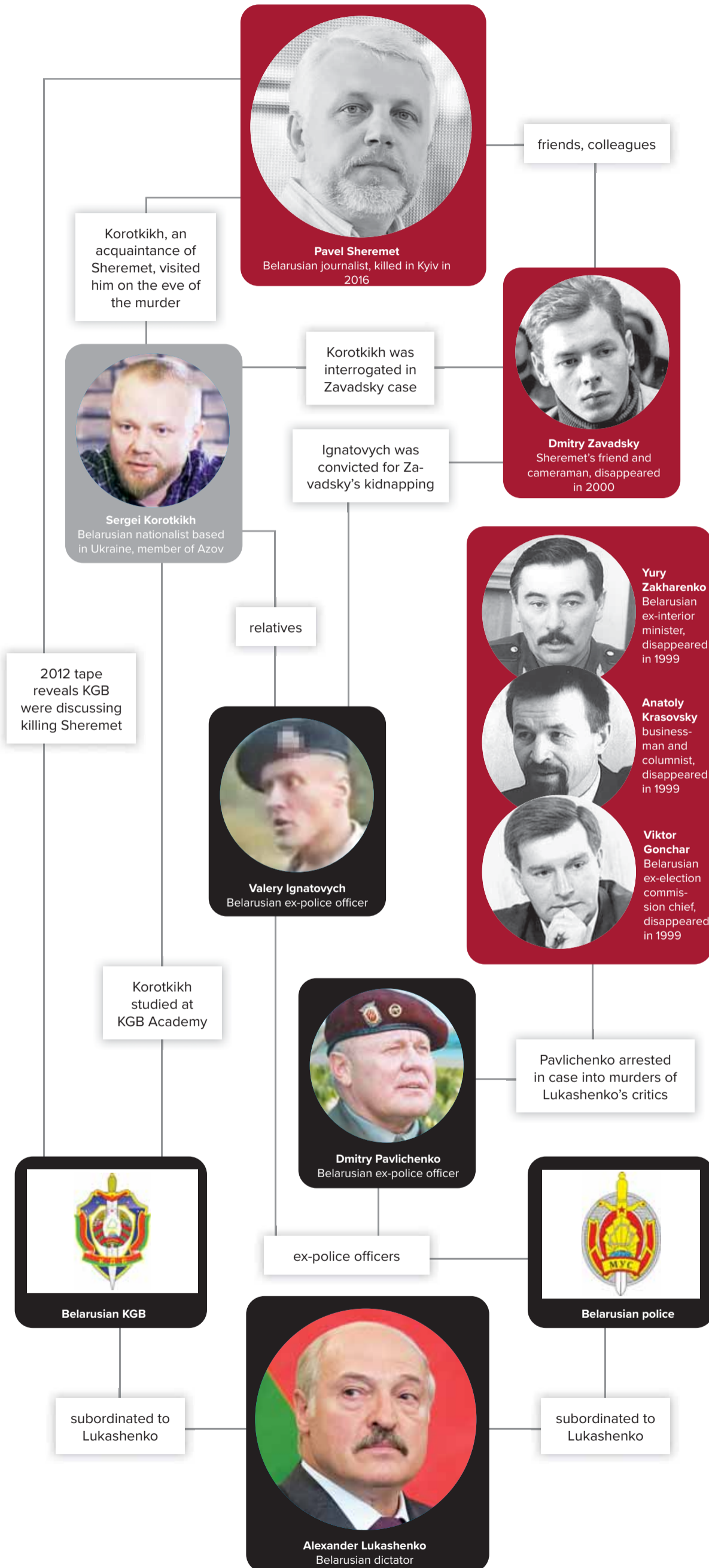
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Murdered critics of Lukashenko



Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko meets Viktor Sheiman, his current office manager and former head of the security council, on Jan. 11, 2021. Sheiman was investigated in the case into political assassinations in Belarus, but Lukashenko stopped the investigation.

president.gov.by

Lukashenko 'had reasons' to kill Sheremet, say dictator's critics

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participating in the murders of Zakharenko and Gonchar.

In 2006, Sheremet and Alkayev, another alleged target of the Belarusian KGB from the newly leaked recording, published "The Death Squad," a book about political assassinations in Belarus. The two were working on a new book when Sheremet was murdered in 2016.

"I don't doubt that employees of the Belarusian KGB are implicated in Sheremet's murder," Alkayev told the Insider, a Russian news site. "He was an irritating factor for Belarus because he and I were working on an update of the book, and (Sheremet) was the editor, publisher and my friend. We were planning to re-publish the previous book and publish a new one."

In 1999, Alkayev was the head of a Minsk detention facility. He was among the first people who exposed the political assassinations in Belarus and fled to Germany.

Sergei Korotkikh

The Belarusian version of Sheremet's murder is also linked to his relationship with a fellow Belarusian, Sergei Korotkikh, who at the time of the murder also lived in Ukraine.

Korotkikh is a Belarusian nationalist with links to neo-Nazi groups. In the 1990s, he studied in the Belarusian KGB academy but dropped out. He is a friend and relative of former Belarusian police officer Valery Ignatovych, who has been convicted for kidnapping and murdering Sheremet's cameraman and friend Zavadsky in 2000.

Late on July 19, 2016, on the eve of Sheremet's murder, six Azov members, including Korotkikh and Azov leader Andriy Biletsky, met with Sheremet near his house. The Azov members later said that they were going to participate in a coal miners' rally the next day, and sought Sheremet's advice about the event's media strategy.

Hours later, unknown people attached a bomb to Sheremet's car, parked near the place of the meeting. In the morning, when Sheremet was driving to work, the bomb exploded and killed him.

A law enforcement source who

was involved in the investigation told the Kyiv Post he did not believe the Azov members' explanation that they had only discussed the miners' rally. He said that it would not have made sense for them to go there at such a late hour instead of just calling him on the phone.

The source spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Conflict with Korotkikh?

Oleh Odnorozhenko, a former deputy commander of Azov, told the Kyiv Post that Sheremet tried to find out whether Korotkikh had something to do with Zavadsky's murder. Odnorozhenko has fled to Poland due to his conflict with Azov's leadership.

"Sheremet and Korotkikh spoke several times in Ukraine," Odnorozhenko said. "Korotkikh was trying to convince him that he had changed his (neo-Nazi and anti-opposition) views. They allegedly came to an understanding. Korotkikh was trying to persuade him that he had nothing to do with Zavadsky's murder."

Odnorozhenko also said that two days before the murder, Sheremet had gone to the Azov headquarters at the Atek factory building in Kyiv.

"(Sheremet) met Korotkikh and other people and had a major quarrel," he said. "This was heard by several people. They heard them argue loudly. They didn't understand what the essence of the argument was but they said it had something to do with Belarus. As far as I understand, Sheremet could have received information that Korotkikh is implicated in the Zavadsky case."

The law enforcement source who was involved in the Sheremet case said that Korotkikh had a potential motive to go after Sheremet — Sheremet's investigations into Zavadsky's murder and into the Belarus death squads of which Korotkikh's relative Ignatovych was allegedly a member. The Azov fighters, including Korotkikh, could also be potential suspects because they had the military experience and weapons to carry out the attack, the source added.

However, the Ukrainian investigation never seriously considered Azov members as possible suspects.

Several critics of Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko were killed in 1999-2000. Belarusian journalist Pavel Sheremet exposed their assassinations and was friends with one of those killed, Dmitry Zavadsky. Sergei Korotkikh, a nationalist with ties to intelligence services, who has previously attacked Lukashenko's opponents, met with Sheremet on the eve of his murder in Kyiv on July 20, 2016.

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4.5 years after Sheremet's murder, all eyes turn to Belarusian regime

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"There is zero reaction from law enforcement agencies," Odnorozhenko added. "They (Azov) enjoy absolute impunity. That's why they do whatever they can and whatever they want."

Korotkikh repeatedly denied involvement in Sheremet's murder.

Years before the murder

Sheremet and Korotkikh got acquainted after the latter arrived in Ukraine and joined Azov in 2014.

In January 2015 Sheremet's site Belarusian Partisan published his interview with Korotkikh, while Ukrainska Pravda ran Sheremet's column about him.

Sheremet said that Korotkikh was a "hero" to Ukrainians due to his participation in the war with Russia.

"Some of my comrades and colleagues started to justify him and wrote that his past is not as important as his present and that, through services rendered to democratic Ukraine, he had atoned for the sins of his youth against the Belarusian people," Sheremet wrote in his column, mentioning Korotkikh's links to Belarusian neo-Nazis and his assaults on Belarusian opposition activists in 1999 and 2013. "I don't believe so. All these high-profile kidnapping cases don't have a statute of limitations and no military feats in Ukraine or elsewhere will prevent us, Belarusians, from bringing serious accusations and going after those suspected of these crimes."

He said, however, that he had talked to Korotkikh and found his explanations convincing and the accusations against him unfounded.

Sheremet's interest in Korotkikh and Azov continued in the months preceding his murder.

For several months before the murder, Sheremet and an Ukrainska Pravda journalist were investigating a conflict between Azov and volunteer Svitlana Zvarych. At the time, Azov accused Zvarych of embezzling part of the money intended as donations for Azov fighters.

Meanwhile, a Belarusian activist who spoke on the condition of anonymity told the Kyiv Post that four days before the murder, Sheremet had asked him whether he had changed his negative opinion of Korotkikh. The nationalist said he had not.

Azov came up in one of Sheremet's last columns. In a July 17, 2016 op-ed, three days before the murder, Sheremet wrote about the arrest of a gang of bank-robbing Azov fighters by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU).

Sheremet praised then-SBU Chief Vasyl Hrytsak and Azov leader Biletsky for avoiding a conflict over the arrest, but warned that Biletsky needs to be "watched" because of his "Nazi youth."

Korotkikh himself and several sources interviewed by the Kyiv Post

Then Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (R) meets Belarusian-born Sergei Korotkikh, a member of Ukraine's Azov regiment, on Dec. 5, 2014. Korotkikh visited journalist Pavel Sheremet on the eve of his murder on July 20, 2016.



described the relationship between him and Sheremet as good.

Others said the relationship was strange, being a supposed friendship between a Belarusian opposition liberal and a pro-Lukashenko neo-Nazi.

"I cannot call this a friendship because Sheremet suspected him of killing his cameraman (Zavadsky)," Odnorozhenko from Azov told the Kyiv Post. "Maybe Sheremet played a game trying to get some information out of him. He was a very professional journalist."

In a 2015 interview, Sheremet asked Korotkikh about his interro-

gation in Zavadsky's murder case. Korotkikh denied that he had anything to do with the murder.

According to Odnorozhenko, Sheremet wasn't satisfied with the answer and asked Korotkikh the same question at some point after the interview.

When Ignatovych was convicted of the murder, many critics didn't believe his supposed motive to target Zavadsky. Allegedly, Ignatovych took revenge against Zavadsky for exposing him as a fighter in Chechnya.

Zavadsky, who reported from Chechnya, told the press about a

Belarusian police officer among the Chechen insurgents. He didn't identify Ignatovych by name, but described him. Officially, Ignatovych fought on the Russian side.

Sheremet believed that Zavadsky's murder had not been properly investigated, and that the organizers and some of the perpetrators had avoided responsibility, according to "Accidental President."

Both Zavadsky's wife and Sheremet's colleagues said that Sheremet continued to be interested in Zavadsky's murder until his death. Sheremet's relations with fellow

Belarusians have now come into the spotlight due to the publication of the recording implicating the Belarusian KGB.

The St. Petersburg Forensic Laboratory for Audio and Visual Documents has confirmed the authenticity of the tape, while the ex-officer who published the tape has given testimony to Ukrainian investigators.

"Lukashenko definitely had reasons to order Pavel's murder," Belarusian investigator Petrushkevych told the Kyiv Post.

Read the full version of this story on www.kyivpost.com.

ON THE MOVE

AVELLUM adds 2 partners, boosting International Arbitration, Cross-Border Litigation, Real Estate and Infrastructure practices



Kostiantyn Likarchuk

Kostiantyn Likarchuk rejoins AVELLUM as Senior Partner and Head of the International Arbitration practice

Kostiantyn focuses on international arbitration, complex cross-border litigation proceedings, asset tracing and recovery, corporate investigations, and international aspects of white collar crime.

He brings over 20 years of legal practice in Ukrainian civil, commercial, and administrative courts of all instances and acts as counsel before arbitral tribunals in major arbitration forums. Kostiantyn advises, along with leading global dispute resolution practices, on all aspects of litigation, including numerous cases involving major common law jurisdictions. He represents international and Ukrainian businesses and investors in their international arbitration and cross-border litigation matters. Kostiantyn also regularly acts as an expert on Ukrainian law before foreign courts, including English courts and arbitral tribunals.

"This is a strategic move for AVELLUM," said Mykola Stetsenko, managing partner of AVELLUM. "We are glad to welcome back AVELLUM's founding partner and creative litigator with unrivalled expertise in handling complex disputes and arbitrations in Ukraine and multiple jurisdictions. The return of Kostiantyn immediately boosts our expertise and capabilities in international arbitration and litigation more generally."

Kostiantyn Likarchuk added: "Along with my team – Mykyta Nota, Lyudmyla Volkova, and Valeriia Lepska – I am thrilled to rejoin the top-notch group of AVELLUM litigators. I am looking forward to representing AVELLUM clients in their most challenging and complex matters."

Kostiantyn is featured in the reputable CIS Arbitration Powerlist-2020 by the Legal 500 ranking. He has also been awarded the top rank in dispute resolution and international arbitration by major international legal directories. Before rejoining AVELLUM Kostiantyn headed the Central and Eastern European and Central Asian dispute resolution practice in a leading international law firm.



Maksym Maksymenko

Maksym Maksymenko promoted to Partner at AVELLUM's Real Estate and Infrastructure practice

Maksym has over 16 years of experience in providing a full range of legal services to international and Ukrainian clients. He focuses on real estate, infrastructure, land, and construction matters, as well as subsoil use.

Over the past 3 years, Maksym advised clients on some of the remarkable projects in Ukraine, including negotiations on the \$1 billion collaboration with GE on behalf of PJSC "Ukrainian Railways"; the acquisition of terminal in the largest Ukrainian seaport and the oil transshipment terminal; and development of a hotel in the Kyiv city centre. Maksym also regularly contributes to legislative improvements in real estate, infrastructure, and land.

"We are pleased to welcome to our partnership a talented partner who grew up in AVELLUM," said Mykola Stetsenko, managing partner of AVELLUM. "Maksym is one of the top lawyers in Ukraine in the area of real estate, infrastructure, and land. He boasts outstanding client relationship skills, and, in addition to that, Maksym is a wonderful colleague and a dedicated mentor to our junior associates."

Maksym Maksymenko added: "I am thankful to my partners and colleagues in AVELLUM for their nonstop support, trust, and inspiration on my way towards partnership. I am proud that our real estate and infrastructure practice has grown into an independent one. There are hundreds of exciting and challenging projects ahead."

Maksym Maksymenko is a Co-Chair of the Infrastructure Committee at the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine and the Head of the Agricultural Law Committee at the Ukrainian Bar Association. He was named a Next Generation Partner in Real Estate and Construction by The Legal 500, and is recommended by the Ukrainian Law Firms 2020 and Best Lawyers rankings. IFLR1000 ranking recognises Maksym as a Highly Regarded Practitioner for Project Development in Ukraine.

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Air Force commander refuses to be 'solely liable' for An-26 crash

By Illia Ponomarenko
ponomarenko@kyivpost.com

VINNYTSIA — The military aviation's top commander, Colonel General Serhiy Drozdov, 58, accidentally found what he believes was a bug concealed under his desk, as he was starting his workday on Jan. 16.

Police and State Security Service officers arrived immediately.

It's unknown whether this was someone snooping around or something else entirely.

But Drozdov's nerves are frayed enough without having to deal with any spy games.

The Air Force's main headquarters has been under fire for weeks as the four-star general has been scrutinized by Ukraine's special services. He's the highest-ranking military suspect in a criminal case surrounding the Sept. 25 crash of an Antonov An-26 aircraft.

To deliver justice for the tragedy that claimed 26 lives, law enforcement went so far as to charge the Air Force's top leader with systemic flaws and negligence.

In an interview with Kyiv Post, General Drozdov denied the charges against him.

Even though violations were committed on the ill-fated flight, the general believes that he can't be held personally liable for every bad call made by personnel in everyday missions.

"(The prosecution) is trying to hold me fully accountable for everything," the general said.

"Yes, I am in charge of the Air Force. But I am responsible for the strategic level... not for the training of every crew for every aircraft, or any ground-to-air missile unit, or every car driver, flight mission, and so on."

"Yes, I do possess broad powers and responsibilities," the general said. "But this is not a direct indication of my sole liability."

In this situation, he only sees the desire to get a high-profile criminal case "to demonstrate that a high level official can be held liable."

Instead of looking for someone to pin all the blame on, the general suggested spending more to modernize the nation's decaying air fleet — which gets barely any funding amid the proxy war with Russia.

Grave violations

The Sept. 25 air incident shook the nation. An Antonov An-26Sh, tail



Police and military operatives guard the Antonov An-26 aircraft crash site near the airfield of Chuhuiv in Kharkiv Oblast late on Sept. 25, 2020.

number 76, suddenly hit the ground and burst into flame near the military airfield of Chuhuiv close to Kharkiv, some 440 kilometers east of Kyiv.

The aftermath was terrible: 26 dead, including 20 young Kharkiv National Air Force University cadets who were just taking another set of Friday night training flights.

A 20-year-old navigation cadet, Vyacheslav Zolochovsky, was the only one to survive the inferno.

An official inquiry found that the aircraft had a sudden malfunction with its left AI-24BT engine. The crew failed to equalize the thrust balance and take a correct landing course.

This led to the aircraft rapidly losing velocity, stalling out, and crashing at 8:45 p.m. near a local highway, 1.5 kilometers away from the landing strip.

The investigation reported an avalanche of "systemic violations of flight safety rules," as well as flight management and control issues by

the Kharkiv flight school and the Chuhuiv 203rd Training Aviation Brigade.

In particular, the commission said the flight school encouraged touch-and-go landings, where an aircraft takes off for a new flight immediately after touching the runway. The school used touch-and-go landings multiple times in a row to save time.

According to the report, amid the rush of six touch-and-go landings, the An-26 crew was unable to detect an upcoming engine malfunction. The crew also lacked experience with emergency response and night flights, which led to their failure to prevent a non-critical malfunction from escalating.

Eventually, on Dec. 18, the State Bureau of Investigations (DBR), issued a note of suspicion for the top Air Force commander. The prosecution charged General Drozdov of negligence for approving service regulations that made the Sept. 25 crash possible.

Law enforcement also charged the 203rd Brigade commanding officer Vyacheslav Hlazunov and flight control officer Oleksandr Zhuk who had authorized touch-and-go landings for the Sept. 25 mission.

Ever since, General Drozdov waged a fierce legal battle against state prosecutors as he faces a very real chance of imprisonment.

Facing the axe

The top commander admits that certain serious violations did take place.

From his perspective, the aircraft crashed due to an engine malfunction after being jeopardized by crew errors and poor flight management. The incident proved that the training brigade and the Kharkiv flight

school overlooked many mistakes and instruction violations.

While the practice of touch-and-go landing has been common for the An-26 family of aircraft for decades, it was not supposed to be used in the Sept. 25 sortie.

"Not a single touch-and-go maneuver was envisaged in the flight mission program," the general said. "But they were being performed. This is what those in direct control of the flight should have noticed."

The Air Force has practiced many successful training programs with the An-26 family of aircraft, but the incident showed that pilot, navigator, flight control and logistics specialist qualifications still need a lot of work, Drozdov said.

"We must now make everyone perform their duties conscientiously," he said. "So there could be fewer risks and tragedies in service."

He denied personal responsibility for the wrong decisions and violations committed by personnel that, from his perspective, were beyond his control.

The general admitted he could face possible removal from his position due to the charges, but he pointed out that no one from the Kharkiv university, or even from the Air Force command, has been indicted or suspected.

President Volodymyr Zelensky, as the nation's supreme commander-in-chief, has yet to voice his ultimate decision.

No rearming

The deadly crash was another wake-up call about the dire state of

Ukraine's military air fleet, which consists entirely of aging Soviet aircraft.

The youngest aircraft in service is now at least 30 years old. The destroyed An-26 has been in service for 43 years.

Since Ukraine became an independent nation in 1991, its Air Force hasn't been given a single new aircraft.

Only in late 2020, after strong public pressure following the crash, the Defense Ministry signed a \$105 million contract to procure three new Antonov An-178 transport planes for the military.

While age is not necessarily a problem, as General Drozdov noted, the Ukrainian Air Force desperately needs new, safer machines. The country's fleet is quickly reaching the limits of possible modernization, according to the general.

"Unfortunately, we have no more time to wait," he said. "We need to introduce radical changes right here and now. Our operational capabilities will be exhausted by 2035."

The Air Force proposed a gradual replacement of old Soviet workhorses like the Mikoyan MiG-29 or Sukhoi Su-27 jets with Western-made multirole fighters. This would let Ukraine retire old Soviet attack and close support aircraft.

The Air Force hopes the United States will provide Ukraine with its used McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagles, or the much newer General Dynamics F-16V Block 70/72 in the future.

Far less likely is the procurement of Swedish-made Saab JAS39 Gripen fighters. Touching the sky with the most advanced Northrop Grumman F-35s (currently procured by neighboring Poland) is regarded as a golden dream.

Yet, apart from the three An-178 light transports, Ukraine is nowhere close to a comprehensive program to modernize its aging Air Force.

"I can't say that we are ready to pay or that someone in the market is ready to provide us with any aircraft," he said. "We are ready to cooperate, but there are no specific proposals yet... I do hope our Defense Ministry will take more vigorous steps in this regard."

The Air Force budget is declining. In 2020, it had nearly Hr 1.63 billion (\$53 million). In 2021, it was assigned just Hr 1.35 billion (\$48 million).

This means the Air Force can barely hold on to the technology it already has, let alone modernize.

"I can barely say that we are surviving, and it is impossible to say that we are striving forward," General Drozdov said.

"There needs to be much more attention to the Air Force. Because it is the greatest defender in warfare where the success of maritime and ground forces depends on air support." 🇺🇦

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Ukraine's Air Force top commander Colonel General Serhiy Drozdov delivers a speech during a graduation ceremony at the National Air Force University in Kharkiv on June 26, 2020.



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New agriculture minister faces lawsuits for alleged Hr 6.6 million theft

By Alexander Query
query@kyivpost.com

Roman Leshchenko, 32, Ukraine's new minister of agriculture, will take office on Feb. 1, but he's already got a lot on his plate.

Leshchenko will lead the ministry as a long-anticipated agricultural land market is set to begin in July. Right now, however, he faces personal troubles: his former employer, U.S. farmer Kurt Groszhans, is suing Leshchenko for allegedly stealing Hr 6.6 million, or \$250,000.

After two years of disputes, Leshchenko approached Groszhans through his lawyers and paid the taken money back the week before he was appointed minister on Dec. 17. Leshchenko said he had borrowed the money, which is disputed by Groszhans.

While the American received the money, he now wants Groszhans to pay damages. Groszhans claims he additionally suffered losses exceeding \$485,000 as he didn't have the money needed to keep running his business and his farming company lost two years of harvest.

Groszhans filed two lawsuits against the new minister in Ukraine in May–October 2020. "I have nothing to lose. I just want justice at that point," Groszhans told the Kyiv Post on Jan. 20.

Despite numerous attempts to reach out to Leshchenko — via his personal and professional emails, personal phone number and through his Facebook page — the new agriculture minister did not answer the Kyiv Post to request for comment.

Leshchenko has never mentioned the dispute publicly.

Secret transfers

When Groszhans settled in Ukraine in February 2017, he dreamt of growing soybeans, corn, and wheat on the country's famous black soil.

Upon his arrival, he invested \$350,000 in a farm near Malyn, a town of 26,000 people in Zhytomyr Oblast, which is about 100 kilometers northwest of Kyiv. He also imported \$650,000 worth of machines, which are now idling.

His dream turned into a nightmare when he appointed Leshchenko as the director of his company Groszhans LLC, where Leshchenko worked in March–September 2018.

According to bank transfers viewed by Ukraine's courts and obtained by the Kyiv Post, Leshchenko secretly moved roughly \$250,000 from Groszhans LLC to his own company Progress LLC during his tenure.

According to article 238 of Ukraine's Civil Code, an executive cannot transfer funds from a company he does not own, to himself or his own company.

Groszhans ended up with no working capital, barely enough money to live on, and farming equipment he can no longer use. Even though Groszhans still owns his company in Ukraine, he couldn't invest in growing crops and lost two years of yields.

"I had to put a mortgage on my house in the U.S. to continue living," he said. He borrowed \$350,000.

He still cannot continue farming in Ukraine because of the lack of



Roman Leshchenko, 32, Ukraine's new minister of agriculture. Leshchenko's former employer, U.S. farmer Kurt Groszhans sued him for allegedly stealing Hr 6.6 million, or \$250,000.

working capital, awaiting his two lawsuits — one in the Cherkasy court against Leshchenko's Progress LLC and another against Leshchenko himself in Kyiv's Economic Court — to be satisfied.

Groszhans has also contacted Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau because police told him the agency was the most competent to investigate officials, but to no avail.

Groszhans also fears Leshchenko's new position at the head of the agriculture ministry will make him feel powerful and that he eventually will escape justice.

Position of power

Dialogues between Leshchenko and Groszhans in messenger application WhatsApp obtained by the Kyiv Post has shown that Leshchenko threatened his former business partner.

Leshchenko said he could have Groszhans put in jail thanks to his vast political connections if the American pursues his claims against him.

"But if you continue (to) terrorize me, I will put all information to the legal body, and you will go to jail," Leshchenko wrote to Groszhans in a message dated February 2019.

Leshchenko will take office on

Feb. 1, when the government fully reinstates the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food.

In September 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers reorganized the Ministry of Agrarian Policy, merging it with the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Agriculture. But the government has recently canceled this decision.

Investigation journalist Igor Stakh claimed in an Oct. 15 interview that Leshchenko's contribution to the campaign of President Volodymyr Zelensky during parliament elections in 2019 played a big role in his appointment.

He gave over \$60,000 (Hr 1.6 million) to Zelensky's Servant of the People party during the campaign, which he failed to declare back then, according to Antikor.com.ua, a news website covering corruption cases. He escaped penalties thanks to a controversial Oct. 29 ruling by the Constitutional Court, which reset the e-declaration system in Ukraine.

Leshchenko began his career as a lawmaker in Cherkasy Oblast and began teaching financial law at Kyiv's Taras Shevchenko National University in 2013.

One of the most vocal lobbyists

for opening Ukrainian farmland to sales, Leshchenko headed the State Service for Geodesy, Cartography, and Cadastre from June 2020 until December.

The year 2021 will be a watershed moment for the newly-reinstated ministry. The land market reform voted in April 2020 will come into effect on July 1, opening a free trade of agricultural land in the country for Ukrainian citizens, instead of the decades-long system when people couldn't sell their land and had to lease it.

During his Dec. 17 speech at the parliament when announcing that he'd take office, Leshchenko pledged to make the agriculture industry more transparent and help farmers receive state support. He added that his ministry would provide benefits to small farmers.

"I promise that we will fulfill the historic mission to restore the Ministry of Agrarian Policy for the sake of our future generations," Leshchenko said.

In a statement that Groszhans sent to the Kyiv Post through his lawyers, the American said that Ukrainians should be wary of Leshchenko's statements because his integrity is questionable. 🇺🇦



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Yulia Tymoshenko seeks to escape shadows of her political past



Sergii Leshchenko
mail.pravda@gmail.com

The year 2020 was full of undesired surprises, but one piece of news was particularly surprising to me.

For the first time in more than 20 years of my journalistic career, Yulia Tymoshenko has decided to file a lawsuit against me. She is suing over my op-ed published on Aug. 6, 2020 in the Kyiv Post, titled: "Pro-Western Tymoshenko sides with Russian agents in Ukraine."

In this article, I highlighted some obscure and obvious signs of cooperation between Tymoshenko and pro-Russian politician Viktor Medvedchuk as they promote common anti-Western narratives and file complaints with the Constitutional Court. There, I also talk about such a prosaic thing as money.

For instance, I wrote that Medvedchuk and his wife Oksana Marchenko have accounts in a little-known Ukrbudininvestbank. The only remarkable fact about this bank is that until June, half of its shares were owned by Tymoshenko's son-in-law Artur Chechotkin. Among nearly a hundred banks in Ukraine, including Austria's Raiffeisen, France's BNP Paribas and even Russia's Sberbank,

they preferred an institution with several branches that sit close to the end of the ranking list.

At the same time, both Tymoshenko and her fellow party member Serhiy Vlasenko received \$5.5 million each at this bank, which was paid in the U.S. under the secret procedure of pre-trial settlement of a dispute. It is unknown who paid it.

And people from Medvedchuk's entourage, two lawmakers of the current Verkhovna Rada convocation, put money into the same little-known bank of the Tymoshenko family. These are Taras Kozak, who is listed as the formal owner of TV channels 112, ZIK and NewsOne, which are pro-Russian propaganda mouthpieces, and Vasyl Nimchenko, who was a judge of the Constitutional Court 17 years ago and allowed then-President Leonid Kuchma to run for a third term de-facto opening the door to the Belarusian scenario in Ukraine. To Kuchma's credit, he decided not to follow this path, but Nimchenko was already working in connection with Medvedchuk who headed the presidential administration.



Then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (R) and then his Ukrainian counterpart Yulia Tymoshenko arrive at a joint press conference in Yalta late on Nov. 19, 2009. Tymoshenko disagrees with widespread criticism of a deal on restoring gas supplies to both Europe and Ukraine that she reached with Putin during her tenure as prime minister.

In my opinion, the fact that Medvedchuk, his wife, and their closest allies trusted their money to a bank affiliated with Tymoshenko is a sign of political closeness.

Choice of court

Tymoshenko filed her lawsuit not by my registration address in Podilskyi District of Kyiv, but in Pecherskyi District, where I had never lived. This court is a symbol of court corruption in Ukraine.

That's where, in recent months, rulings have been made to destroy the National Anti-Corruption Bureau cases. Tymoshenko is not the only politician who chose the wrong but the loyal court. Medvedchuk did the same when he sued me.

Unlike Medvedchuk's lawsuit, Tymoshenko's lawsuit against me was assigned to a fair judge, who redirected the case to the proper court.

Tymoshenko's lawsuit concerns seven paragraphs in my op-ed, where I give a political assessment of her actions or recite well-known facts. Tymoshenko demands that I publish a rebuttal on any social network, not on the Kyiv Post pages, where a text that caused her dissatisfaction was published. This is also very unusual. I assume that it means that a rebuttal on Tik Tok will do.

The only valid explanation for this is that Tymoshenko needs not a rebuttal, but a court decision for her to use and its further distribution on TV channels as proof of her innocence.

Tymoshenko and Russia

The paragraphs that Tymoshenko demands to refute are pretty significant. They shed light on her 25-year political career.

Thus, Tymoshenko argues against the part that reads "she recently has made another political flip and now almost openly supports Viktor Medvedchuk, a leader of the 44-member pro-Russian opposition in Ukraine's parliament and a personal friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin."

Tymoshenko claims that these

words damage her business reputation.

It means that Tymoshenko understands that her ties to Medvedchuk are toxic for her reputation. But there are many publications on this topic in the media. Medvedchuk called Tymoshenko the best prepared candidate for the presidency before the 2019 election. A similar assessment was made by the Russian website *Ukraina.ru*, which is part of the Kremlin's propaganda toolkit: "Since the mid-2000s, Medvedchuk has believed that Tymoshenko is the best option for Ukraine."

In a 2017 interview, Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky described in detail how the alliance emerged: "Official Russia has been supporting Tymoshenko for days and years. Yulia Tymoshenko and Vladimir Putin agreed on everything back on Sept. 23, 2005. It was historic, albeit semi-confidential, visit of Yulia Vladimirovna to Moscow after her first resignation as prime minister. She met with all the leaders of the Russian state."

Lobbyism

The second issue, which Tymoshenko demanded to refute, concerns the cost of lobbyists in the U.S. In fact, in the U.S., this information is public — just one of a whole bunch of companies that represented Tymoshenko, Wiley Rein LLP, reported to the U.S. Department of Justice that they were transferred \$1.15 million.

Not a single penny of these funds was transferred from the official account of the *Batkivshchyna* party. Tymoshenko herself also did not sign the bill, because all these years her declaration looked like a mockery of her way of life and was full of ridiculously small numbers. Instead, payments were made from a variety of individuals and firms, including offshore companies. And one of the

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Leshchenko: Why Yulia Tymoshenko is suing me

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companies that paid for lobbying in Tymoshenko's interests is now involved in the high-profile NABU case against Mykola Martynenko, a former lawmaker.

Tymoshenko was the first to hire American lobbyists on an individual basis — the U.S. Department of Justice's website still contains Edelman's 1997 report. Then, \$116,000 was paid for Tymoshenko's visit to Washington, D.C. In part, these lobbyists were also supposed to help the then-Prime Minister of Ukraine Pavlo Lazarenko, who was later sentenced to eight years in prison in the U.S.

More allegations

Another sentence that Tymoshenko wants to disprove is that she helped

the sale of a large Ukrainian corporation, Industrial Union of Donbas, to Vnesheconombank of Russia, whose supervisory board was headed by Putin himself.

This transaction took place before the 2010 presidential election. And, according to Russia's Forbes, who cited its sources, \$300 million of the whole sum could go to Tymoshenko's election campaign. The newspaper Kommersant at the same time wrote that the deal was personally supervised by Putin.

The fourth issue challenged by Tymoshenko is the claim that the 2009 gas contract was unfavorable for Ukraine. But this is supported by the assessment of the head of Naftogaz Andriy Kobolev, who claims that in the 10 years of contracts for the supply and transit of gas with Russian Gazprom, Ukraine's



Viktor Medvedchuk (L), a lawmaker and leader of the pro-Russian faction Opposition Platform, speaks with colleagues during the parliament session on Feb. 2, 2020 in Kyiv.

Oleg Petrusiuk

losses for Ukraine reached \$32.1 billion or more than Hr 60,000 for each Ukrainian family.

The next "problematic" paragraph concerns a joint petition from the Tymoshenko's and Medvedchuk's factions to the Constitutional Court to declare unconstitutional how Naftogaz was unbundled.

This joint work of the two politicians may be beneficial to Russia because it will allow Ukraine to cancel the 2019 transit agreement. And the risk has been and remains high, given the efforts with which the Constitutional Court tried to undo the anti-corruption reforms in 2020.

And this is not only my assessment but also that of gas expert Oleksandr Kharchenko, director of the Center for Energy Research. He wrote that "if the Constitutional Court declares the unbundling of Naftogaz and the gas transmission system operator illegal, and we know the quality of Ukrainian litigation in the 'under pressure format,' and especially when it is Medvedchuk who is influencing, it will create grounds for Gazprom to call the transit agreement void."

Serhiy Makogon, general director of the Gas Transmission System Operator of Ukraine, also shared these concerns: "Ukraine should not give a single chance to terminate

this contract, in which forces both outside and inside Ukraine may be interested. As evidenced by the recent lawsuit about the unconstitutionality of the Gas Transmission System Operator unbundling."

In the latest block of her claims, Tymoshenko protests that she helped Russia's information attack on Ukraine's negotiating position on a peaceful settlement in the Donbas. Her words were repeatedly used as strong proof of the plausibility of the most absurd accusations. Like the involvement of the Ukrainian authorities in the supply of rocket engines to North Korea. She also promoted — in conjunction with the Russian media — the narrative about Ukraine's "attack" on the occupied Donbas and the subsequent cancellation of elections.

Another point where I noticed the consonance of Tymoshenko's and Medvedchuk's positions concerns the creation of an inter-parliamentary platform for resolving the conflict in Donbas. There are many publications regarding this in the media. An idea blessed by Putin and promoted by Medvedchuk originally had no support in Ukraine — until suddenly Tymoshenko suggested creating a parliamentary group for negotiations on Donbas.

In 2021, Tymoshenko will celebrate the 25th anniversary of her political career who first ran for the Verkhovna Rada in the district in the depressed areas of the Kirovograd Oblast, where the revolutionary Lev Trotsky was born. She undoubtedly influenced the development of independent Ukraine as much as he influenced the processes in post-imperial Russia, although she — same as Trotsky — didn't reach the highest rank.

In recent months, Tymoshenko has significantly reduced her criticism, and her faction has supported the 2021 budget. Taking advantage of the fact that the Servants of the People party has lost mono-majority, Tymoshenko is trying to take a chance and get back into power, giving votes at a critical moment.

For this, reportedly, her nominee was appointed the head of the State Grain and Food Company.

Tymoshenko's struggle for power doesn't stop. And the topic of her relations with Medvedchuk, the coverage of which worried her, will be the subject of additional analysis due to her lawsuit.

Sergii Leshchenko is a Kyiv Post columnist, investigative journalist, and former member of the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliament.

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Ukraine can afford to vaccinate some 10 million people in 2021

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“350,000 people are in the first priority group that will be vaccinated,” Stepanov said in an interview with the 24 TV channel on Jan. 12.

The second group in line includes Ukrainians who turned 60 and have medical conditions, employees of educational facilities and the staff of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine: the National Police, Armed Forces and other institutions that ensure the state security.

The second phase of vaccination is expected to start in late March and will cover 2.5 million people, Stepanov said at a closed-door meeting with lawmakers.

In the third stage are people between the ages of 18 and 59, who have medical conditions and professionals most exposed to coronavirus.

On Dec. 22, the Ministry of Health approved the plan for the nation’s immunization. According to it, 21 million Ukrainians in the risk group will get their shots by March 2022.

To get there, Ukraine is continuing negotiations with other vaccine producers. They started in May 2020, according to Stepanov.

On Dec. 30, the ministry announced that its negotiations with British-Swedish company AstraZeneca are in full swing.

Can the Ukrainian government afford to vaccinate everyone in Ukraine?

No. The government currently doesn’t have the money to vaccinate the 21 million in the risk group.

In December 2020, the government allocated Hr 1.3 billion (\$46 million) for vaccine purchase. The ministry spent \$34.5 million on Sinovac’s vaccine.

Additionally, Hr 2.6 billion (\$91 million) was allocated to COVID-19 vaccination in the Health Ministry’s 2021 budget. This is enough to buy 5.2 million vaccines if the price of one dose remains \$18, the price of a single dose from Sinovac.

However, on Jan. 21, the ministry announced that the Central Bank would give Ukraine Hr 2.5 billion (\$89 million) to buy vaccines.

That way, Ukraine will be able to vaccinate 10 million out of the target 21 million people.



From left: Health Minister Maksym Stepanov, Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko and Economy Minister Ihor Petrashko talk during a parliamentary session in Verkhovna Rada in Kyiv on Oct. 20, 2020.

Kostyantyn Chernichkin

According to him, Ukraine is considering launching an electronic database where all the vaccinations will be recorded.

“When mandatory vaccination passports are introduced at the international level, Ukrainian doctors will be able to promptly issue a certificate of vaccination,” Lyashko said on Jan. 20 during an interview with Ukraine24 TV channel.

The government will decide whether to introduce vaccination passports when it becomes clear whether the vaccinated person is fully prevented from spreading coronavirus disease after getting a shot, Lyashko said at a briefing on Jan. 12.

“According to the rules issuing such a document is allowed only if the vaccine is WHO-approved. As of now, only Pfizer has such authorization,” he added.

When will herd immunity emerge in Ukraine?

Not soon, according to Semen Yesylevskyy, biophysicist and leading researcher at the Institute of Physics of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Yesylevskyy told the Kyiv Post that Ukraine faces two problems: the Health Ministry’s inability to properly organize vaccination and the public’s reluctance to get vaccinated.

Forty percent of Ukrainians do not want to get inoculated even if it is free, according to a survey by the Rating group in late November.

If the vaccine is just 50% effective like Sinovac’s, the people would be even less keen to get vaccinated, Yesylevskyy believes.

“If the authorities manage to vaccinate 99% of the population with, say, 50% effective vaccine it would be enough to forget about coronavirus,” the scientist said.

“But this will never happen. In Ukraine, we will be lucky if at least one-third of the population gets vaccinated. But if this vaccine is 50% effective it is unclear whether this will be enough for herd immunity to appear,” he continued.

So, what happens if Ukraine does not quickly vaccinate enough people?

In that case, at least 100,000 Ukrainians will die of coronavirus, Yesylevskyy believes.

“If 70–80% of the population contracts coronavirus, we will likely have an additional death toll of 100,000,” he said.

“If we look at it optimistically and suppose that the vaccination starts in March, we still have 1.5 months before it. And the vaccination is not immediate. It will last for a few months at least. Hence we will have four or five more months of the circulation of the virus,” he continued.

“And if the number of people contracting it remains the same as it is now, half of the population will get infected by summer.”

This means that many people will get a natural immunity and won’t require an urgent vaccination, but many other people will die. ❁

The Health Ministry said it needs Hr 15.1 billion (\$539 million) to vaccinate everyone in the risk groups. For comparison, that is more than the Health Ministry spent on all the medications and medical equipment procurement in 2020, which was around \$460 million.

The ministry said it is looking for additional funds for vaccination.

\$18 a dose — isn’t that expensive?

That is disputable but many believe this is quite pricey.

According to Nashi Groshi’s procurement watchdog, Ukraine paid \$18 per dose to Sinovac Biotech for a vaccine that’s supposedly 50.4% effective while Moldova paid the same amount to Pfizer for a vaccine that’s 95% effective.

Will the vaccine be available commercially in Ukraine?

Yes. Apart from the limited amount

of free vaccines provided by the state, Ukrainians will have the option to buy vaccines for themselves independently.

Lekhim, a Ukrainian pharmaceutical company responsible for supplying 1.9 million doses of Chinese vaccine, signed another distribution contract with Sinovac.

On Jan 11, the company announced it would import 5 million doses of Sinovac Biotech’s vaccine for commercial use in April-May.

Lekhim is the exclusive supplier of the Chinese vaccine in Ukraine. It plans to launch mass production of this vaccine in Ukraine’s eastern city of Kharkiv in 2022.

It’s not clear how much the vaccine will cost for consumers who want to buy it in Ukraine.

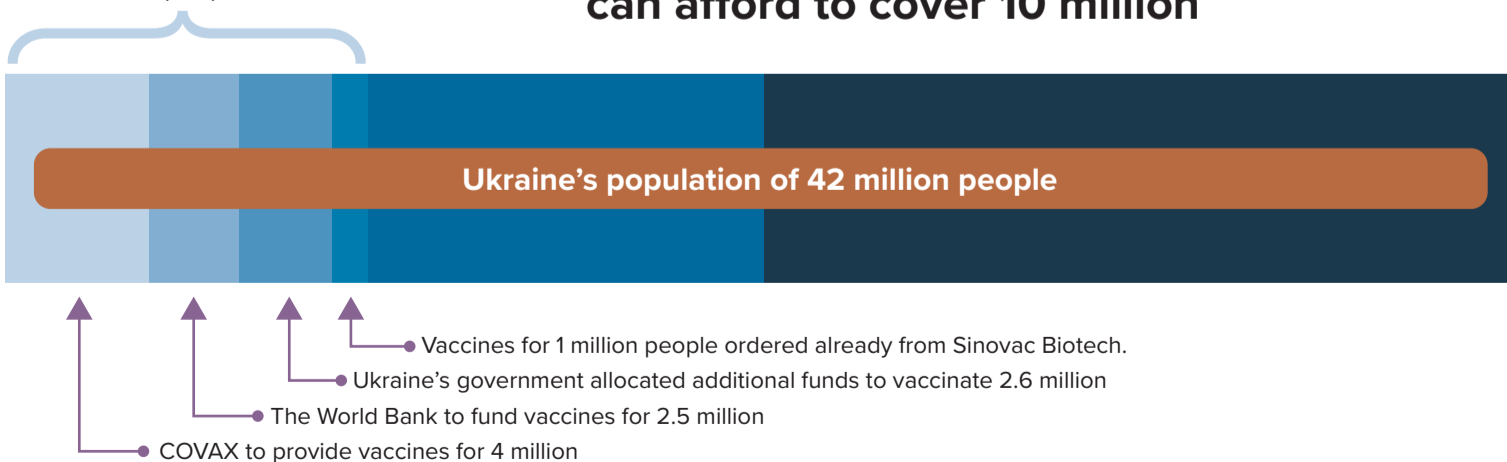
It will become available by summer, according to Stepanov.

Will Ukrainians get ‘vaccine passports’?

This is unclear. Introducing so-called vaccine

Ukraine wants to vaccinate 21 million, can afford to cover 10 million

The government can vaccinate 10 million people in 2021

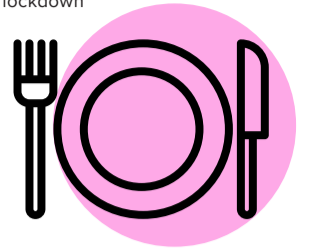


The government’s vaccination target: 21 million people in risk groups

Lifestyle

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As the nationwide lockdown ends on Jan. 24, Kyiv restaurants, cafes and bars will open their doors in the morning of Jan. 25. Treat yourself to a cup of fresh coffee and bakery, all the while supporting local businesses.



Kachorovska family footwear business outgrows its own shoes

By Daria Shulzhenko
shulzhenko@kyivpost.com

Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world, they say.

Although 32-year-old Alina Ocheretyana never aimed to conquer the world, shoes have indeed led her to astonishing success: She is the co-founder and CEO of one of Ukraine's biggest and beloved footwear brands.

Kachorovska originated from the Ocheretyana's family's footwear atelier in her hometown of Zhytomyr, a provincial capital 140 kilometers west of Kyiv.

Over the years, it has flourished into a prosperous Kyiv-based company with three stores and a retail website that sell thousands of pairs of shoes per year. Its high-quality and comfortable, yet elegant footwear, along with bags and other accessories, are loved by local celebrities, designers and bloggers.

"We are a modest Ukrainian family," Ocheretyana told the Kyiv Post. "It's just, we love what we do."

With the sky being the limit for Kachorovska, the brand has recently expanded into a holding company, Kacho Group, to please their clientele with new products and services. Among other things, it is set to launch an apparel collection and a sports shoes line, expand and rebrand the store chain and enter the international market.

"This is only the beginning of our transformation," Ocheretyana says.

Back to 1957

Although the Kachorovska brand is 14 years old, its history traces back to 1957 when Leonida Kachorovska, Ocheretyana's grandmother, mastered the craft of shoemaking. Later, as a shoe factory employee, she started making tailored footwear for private clients, desperately looking for some variety, which was a rarely accessible privilege during Soviet times.

Then Ocheretyana's mother, Olena Kachorovska, joined her mother. Experiencing a high demand, the two moved their service from home to a small Zhytomyr workshop in the 1990s.

Ocheretyana was surrounded by shoemakers since early childhood but never wanted to become one, moving to Kyiv in 2004 to study law.

But because she needed pocket money, Ocheretyana started taking orders from clients in the capital, serving as an intermediary for her family's business. The interest in Kachorovska custom shoes grew quickly and the young entrepreneur soon rented an office in Podil, near the university where she studied.

Ocheretyana's own demand also



The family behind Kachorovska, one of Ukraine's biggest shoe and accessory brands, poses for a photograph: CEO Alina Ocheretyana (L), her grandmother Leonida Kachorovska (C) and mother Olena Kachorovska, as they celebrate the 80th birthday of Ocheretyana's grandmother in September 2019.

pushed the brand to design new products. When she couldn't find a decent bag on the market, she designed one for herself. And so Kachorovska started manufacturing bags.

A major step forward came in 2010 when Ocheretyana and her husband, Ruslan Ocheretyaniy, started promoting the brand on Facebook, soon attracting thousands of followers.

By 2013, Kachorovska had sold around 25,000 of their custom items, producing about 200 pairs of hand-made shoes a month.

"We know everything about feet," Ocheretyana laughs, as she jokes about writing a book about feet one day.

As their number of clients kept growing, the wait for a pair of Kachorovska shoes increased from one month to two or three. That's when the atelier started transforming, having launched their first collection of ready-made shoes that featured classy loafers, oxfords

with silver metallic toes and pumps designed by Ocheretyana, and made of high-quality Italian leather.

"We have sold around 30–50% of what we produced in one week," Ocheretyana says. "That was the best indicator of success."

Now almost all Kachorovska clients are from Kyiv and the brand combines ready-made drops with individual tailoring still done in Zhytomyr.

Crisis and growth

When downtown Kyiv was ablaze with massive protests against then-President Viktor Yanukovich in 2014, it was clear to everyone that the life of the whole country was going to change.

Still, no one expected the crisis to bring such a strong interest in goods that were made in Ukraine. But it did.

As the revolution wrapped up, Ukrainians, driven by patriotism,

rushed to support local businesses. Ukrainian brands and companies were riding the popularity wave all over the country, and Kachorovska was no exception.

"This economic patriotism has given huge advance trust to the Ukrainian manufacturer," Ocheretyana says. "It would have been impossible without the crisis."

As demand grew, Kachorovska provided the supply, releasing several collections of shoes and bags every year. After selling online for years, the company finally opened its first brick and mortar store in Kyiv's Podil district in 2015. The space had a little twist, combining a retail shop with a café.

In the years to come, the brand opened another Kachorovska store in Kyiv and one more in the southern Black Sea port city of Odesa.

City Life

With Yana Mokhonchuk
yanamokhonchuk@gmail.com

5 Kyiv tattoo artists for every style

A postcard from a beloved location will remind us of a joyful vacation. But it's only on rare occasions, once a year at best, that we get to that distant drawer full of bric-a-brac.

A memento tattoo is a much more daring approach to preserving an important experience. It's also the one that will last and serve as a pleasant reminder almost on a daily basis.

Whether it's a chestnut leaf, a subway token or Kyiv's phone code of 044, there are plenty of symbolic designs tattoo enthusiasts can choose from to capture their feelings about Ukraine through ink.

And as the global tattoo culture keeps growing, for some ink fans, the process is the other way around — they travel abroad specifically to get tattooed by foreign artists whose style they dig.

Luckily, Ukraine has many tattoo artists with versatile styles and techniques. And their price tags, starting as low as \$50, will entice western travelers who would have to spend at least twice as much for the smallest tattoo in their home countries.

Teti Malik

Teti Malik, 28, has always been attracted to tattoos as a symbol of rebellion.

So when her friend offered her to practice with his tattoo machine, she didn't think twice. That same friend was her first client, who got an image of a bee.

Malik mainly draws abstract sketches with elements of calligraphy. She loves blackwork and practices freehand, a technique in which an artist works immediately on the skin, almost without a pre-planned sketch.

She gets inspiration from art history, music and even random blurs she draws on paper or canvas.

Malik's style has been a hit among foreigners, attracting customers from France, the United States, Switzerland and Egypt.

The artist has an individual approach to each client.

"Every person is unique and if you take into account the anatomy, characteristics and features of each one, perceive the body as the main and beautiful basis for the image, you will certainly come up with an original and special piece," Malik told the Kyiv Post.

Malik's price rate starts at \$100. Get an appointment via Instagram [tetimalik.tattoo](https://www.instagram.com/tetimalik.tattoo).

City Life

These ink artists capture people's emotions, experiences & stories

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Eugene Novohatsky

Because of his passion for drawing as a kid, Eugene Novohatsky's dad once joked he would become a tattoo artist.

Nobody's laughing now that Novohatsky, 22, has a line of clients waiting to get inked.

Soon after learning the tattoo craft as a student, Novohatsky got a job at the local 22 tattoo studio, where he has been working for nearly three years now.

Once fascinated by the Chicano and Black&Grey styles, combining black color, graceful thin lines, clear contours, shadows and high contrast, Novohatsky is crafting his own style as a saturated version of the two.

His favorite tattoo themes are Greco-Roman sculpture and architecture, travel and female portraits. All the while, he is open to experiments.

"For me it's like a challenge, a rebus that I have to solve," Novohatsky told the Kyiv Post.

One of his most memorable experiences in the studio was when a U.S. client flew all the way to Ukraine just to get inked by Novohatsky. Aside from feeling honored, the artist was also fascinated by working with a dark complexion for the first time, since the customer was African-American. The piece was a sleeve dedicated to the client's travel adventures.

"It turned out pretty cool!" Novohatsky says.

Novohatsky's price rate ranges between \$360 and \$600. Get an appointment via Instagram novohatskytattoo.

Anna Zelenska

At first sight, it is hard to believe that tattoos by Anna Zelenska are real. They look more like watercolor paintings. Her colorful sketches feature movie scenes, reproductions of paintings and detailed portraits of people.



Eugene Novohatsky gives an arm tattoo to a customer at the 22 tattoo studio in Kyiv on Jan. 14, 2021. Novohatsky's works are based on Chicano and Black&Grey styles, mixing black color, graceful thin lines, clear contours, shadows and high contrast.

Zelenska thinks that only color can truly convey an emotion, mood or idea that a person wants to express through a tattoo.

Zelenska, 22, caught a bug for drawing when she was a child.

"I always wanted to capture a certain moment in life or a person's emotion on the paper," Zelenska told the Kyiv Post.

Now she does it on skin, having become a tattoo artist five years ago.

Zelenska loves listening to clients' stories of coming up with a certain design — what's the experience that pushed them to get it and what senses they put into it.

And some stories amaze her above expectation.

Once, a woman made a surprise for her boyfriend by bringing him with his eyes closed to Zelenska's tattoo salon. When he opened his eyes,

he had a fresh tattoo of an ultrasound photo of an unborn child — that's how he found out he was soon to become a father.

Zelenska's other customer once got a tattoo based on a drawing made by her four-year-old daughter, capturing the vision of this world through the eyes of her child.

The tattoo culture is at times perceived as something trendy and superficial. But Zelenska looks deeper.

"The main thing is the emotion that a person puts into the sketch," the artist said. "And the emotion that I feel in the process," she added.

Zelenska's price rate starts at \$200. Get an appointment via Instagram zelenskaya.tattoo or email zelenskayatattoo@gmail.com.

Dima Homa

Dima Homa's career is a real "through

the thorns to the stars" story.

He discovered a drive for tattoos in high school, was drawing day and night and attended multiple workshops and ink festivals only to face a number of rejections when he applied for work.

But Homa didn't give up. Instead, he set up a small studio in a cupboard. He promoted himself by sharing his contacts with every person he met who had at least one tattoo.

All that hard work and dedication paid off. The artist now has his own studio that has welcomed customers from the United States, Canada, Europe, Dubai, Turkey and China.

Homa, 23, became popular thanks to his signature colored tattoo portraits of famous personalities and fictional characters.

The artist says that he always steps

in to explain the cultural context of a sketch to a client when he sees that they clearly don't understand it and are driven solely by its trendiness. He says that he even lost customers because of his honesty but has never regretted it.

"Money for me is an accompanying and pleasant bonus," Homa told the Kyiv Post.

Homa's price rate starts at \$200 per session. Get an appointment via Instagram: dima_homaa.

Mary Tereshchenko

Mary Tereshchenko has a thing for plants.

She grows them at home, volunteers in a local botanical garden and runs a plant store.

It's no wonder that her tattoo portfolio is another embodiment of that love — images of olive branches, lotus flowers and blooming cacti are all over her clients' bodies.

"Nature is the largest collection of ideas that inspires me with its diversity," Tereshchenko, 31, told the Kyiv Post.

She works in a style called line-work, which mixes hatching shadows and thin lines.

The artist values the exclusivity of a tattoo. That's why she never copies or repeats sketches, but always draws them herself. She also stubbornly avoids tattoo clichés, like dandelions, lavender sprigs or flocks of birds.

Tereshchenko often gets invitations from foreign studios to join as a visiting artist. She has temporarily worked in India, Germany, Italy and Poland so far. As soon as international travel resumes, the artist wants to continue traveling and tattooing people abroad. She says that it's an amazing opportunity to combine professional experience with discovering new destinations.

"This is one of the most interesting creative professions," she says.

Tereshchenko's price rate starts at \$100. Get an appointment via Instagram mary_tereshchenko.



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Kachorovska went from tiny shoe workshop to holding company

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By then, several Ukrainian stars were spotted wearing items by Kachorovska. All the while, the brand's footwear started appearing on runways in New York, Paris, Milan and London, complementing garments by Ukrainian designers.

Ukrainian women

A Ukrainian woman and her needs have always been the center of Kachorovska's attention.

When designing products, the brand's team imagines the everyday life of a Ukrainian woman and takes into account things as nuanced as local weather conditions and the quality of the roads.

One of their best-selling products, Riri boots, for instance, are lightweight leather boots in different colors with an extra-chunky tractor sole, suitable for walking on imperfect Ukrainian roads in any weather. A pair costs Hr 3,400 (\$120) before discounts.

High-heel shoes by Kachorovska are another combination of comfort, style and sophistication. Their pleated satin clogs and sandals from the recent joint collection with pop diva Tina Karol, use a nine-centi-

meter heel, comfortable enough for walking and dancing. Yet the elegant silhouette mixed with delicate satin and adorned with Swarovski crystals, is a perfect pair for the most festive occasion. Each Tina pair costs Hr 5,200 (\$184).

Kachorovska's love and care for Ukrainian women are also reflected in their media campaigns. One of their touching videos features local female celebrities talking about the challenges of being a woman in modern Ukraine. It started with the words "I'm a Ukrainian woman, I wear heels and sneakers at the same time."

"It's about a girl from (Kyiv) Mohyla Academy, a singer, an actress or a manager. It's about Ukrainian women and how strong they are," Ocheretyana says.

Transformation

Without a doubt, 2020 was an exceptionally challenging year for the whole world. The coronavirus crisis swept away many businesses that couldn't adjust to the new reality. But not Kachorovska.

Just like all other non-essential businesses in Ukraine, the Kachorovska factory in Zhytomyr stopped operations during the lockdown in March. But just before that, in a rush to complete indi-



Ukrainian shoe and bag brand Kachorovska designed their recent collection together with Ukrainian pop diva Tina Karol. The drop features elegant pleated satin clogs, sandals and mini-bags adorned with Swarovski crystals.

vidual orders, their shoemakers manufactured 150 custom pieces in three days — an incredibly small amount of time for this volume of work.

That inspired Ocheretyana to optimize production and prioritize her custom-made shoes. Now Kachorovska produces around 600 individual orders per month.

The quarantine that forced people to spend more time indoors has become another inspiration for Kachorovska. The brand launched its first collection of home footwear with soft fluffy pastel-colored slippers, which have become a real hit. Not only have Kyiv fashionistas worn the shoes at home, but also

shown them off all around the capital.

The same year, Ocheretyana realized that Kachorovska has long been more than just a footwear brand. Besides producing their own collections, Kachorovska served as an outsource manufacturer of leather goods for fashion designers such as Bevza, The Coat and many more.

Having outgrown its own shoes, the brand announced a transformation into a holding company, Kacho Group, which reorganizes the brand's activity under new entities. The group's K.lab will produce goods for other brands upon order, Factory 1957 will provide tailoring services.

Kachorovska, meanwhile, will soon drop its first apparel collection and a sports shoes line developed with famous Ukrainian esports company Na'Vi. The label also plans to rebrand its stores and open new ones in Lviv and Zaporizhia.

And in what might be its biggest project, Kachorovska is constructing a new "dream-factory" for its employees in Zhytomyr, hoping to finish in 2022.

Although Ocheretyana says it might be too ambitious to call Kacho Group a holding company, the entrepreneur is sure that "as you name the boat, that's how it shall float." 🇺🇦

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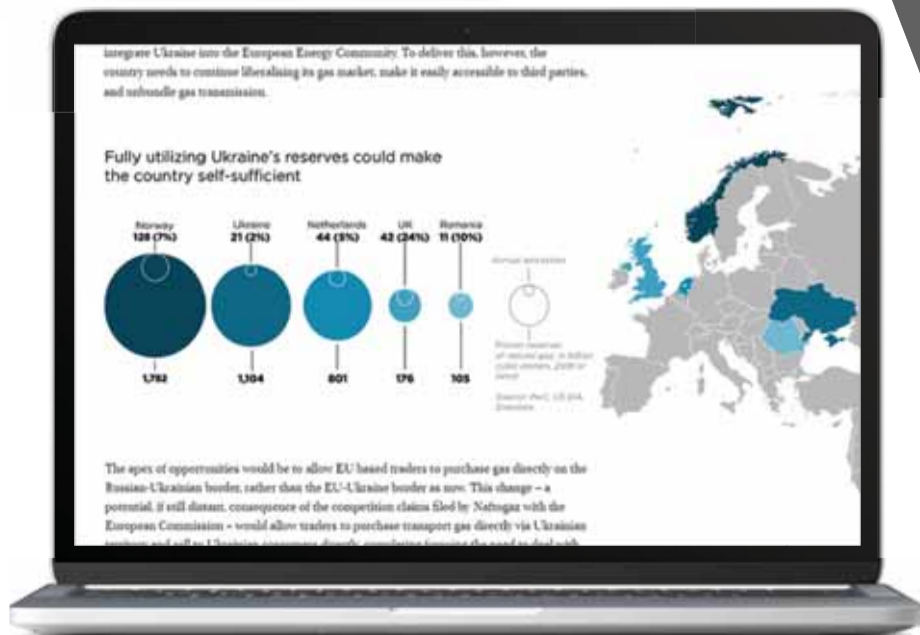
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