

Spot Report: Zelensky Cancels NABU/ SAPO independence

Your inside partner in Ukraine
KI INSIGHTS WEEKLY REPORT

Wednesday, July 23

Note: This is a dynamic event and the spot report is aimed to provide context and additional insight. However, please be aware that the situation may change drastically and unpredictably.

WHAT HAPPENED AND KEY OBSERVATIONS

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Hard to say

Source: Razumkov; some totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

KEY RISKS

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THE 20 BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS OF NABU AND SAPO

What are NABU/SAPU and what is their role in Ukraine's "anti-corruption ecosystem"

Both organisations were founded early in the term of former president Petro Poroshenko. NABU or the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine was created in 2014 following the Euromaidan revolution and began work in October 2015. A separate, largely independent, subunit of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine called SAPO (Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office) was established to coordinate the work of NABU.

Over the years since the foundation of these organisations there was criticism of both organisations for negligence, inaccuracy, as well as ineffectiveness. Despite this, these organisations managed to bring to down senior governmental officials (more below) and were feared by corrupt figures at the very top of the Ukrainian state.

Note: Many of the key anti-corruption figures involved in recent government crackdowns like Vitaliy Shabunin had been highly critical at points of SAPO, but is firmly against this move, going as far as to portray Zelensky as a new Yanukovich.

Below is a list of some of the key figures who were taken down by NABU/SAPO from across the senior reaches of the Ukrainian state.

1. The Zlochevskyi Case, or "The Biggest Bribe in History" (2020–2023)

In August 2023, former Ecology Minister Mykola Zlochevskyi was convicted for attempting to bribe officials with \$5 mn to close a criminal case against him. The bribery scheme involved tax officials and Burisma executives and was uncovered by an undercover NABU agent. Zlochevskyi fled abroad

but later accepted a plea deal, paying a fine and donating UAH 660 mn to Ukraine's military. He owns Burisma, a company linked to the scandal that led to former U.S. President Trump's first impeachment (Hunter Biden worked there).

2. Cases of Rotterdam+ (started in 2016, 2022)

The case has two episodes. The first episode began in 2016 and involves six individuals, including the head and members of the National Commission for State Regulation of Energy and Utilities (NERC) and representatives of private heat-generating companies. They approved the so-called "Rotterdam+" formula, which included fictitious transportation costs for coal from the port of Rotterdam, resulting in electricity consumers overpaying more than UAH 19 bn in 2016–2017. The investigation was completed in 2022, and the case was sent to court in 2023.

The second episode began in 2018 and involved 14 individuals, including former and current NERC officials and representatives of private companies, who continued to apply the "Rotterdam+" formula, causing consumers to overpay more than UAH 20 bn in 2018–2019. The investigation of the second episode was completed in 2023, and the materials were also sent to court in 2024. Both episodes are linked to causing damage to state and public interests through abuse of office and assisting private companies in gaining excessive profits.

Note: Some independent energy experts have noted the Rotterdam+ model did not in fact deviate significantly from accepted commercial practices in the energy industry; there are grounds to believe the case was leveraged and promoted to reduce the financial and political influence of oligarch Rinat Akhmetov.

3. Oleksandr Onyshchenko's "Gas Case" (started in 2015)

On April 5, 2024, the High Anti-Corruption Court sentenced former MP Oleksandr Onyshchenko in absentia to 15 years in prison with asset confiscation for organizing a scheme that misappropriated UAH 740 mn by reselling gas from Ukrgezvydobuvannya at undervalued prices. The total damages from his actions were estimated at around UAH 3 bn. The case involved 29 people, while Onyshchenko has been hiding abroad since 2016.

4. Case of Roman Nasirov, Head of the State Fiscal Service (started in 2022)

Roman Nasirov, former head of the State Fiscal Service, is accused of receiving the largest bribe in Ukraine's history (over UAH 722 mn) for VAT refunds to companies linked to agricultural baron Oleh Bakhmatiuk. Part of the funds was laundered through companies in the British Virgin Islands and later spent on building a residential-office complex. In 2023, 81 real estate properties and over UAH 30 mn were seized. The case was transferred to HACC, and Nasirov was released from pre-trial detention in 2024 under a UAH 55 mn bail.

5. The “Amber Case” of MPs (started in 2017)

NABU criminal investigation into MPs Boryslav Rozenblat and Maksym Polyakov for receiving illicit benefits in aiding the foreign company “Fujairah” in amber mining. During 2016–2017, an undercover detective documented the transfer of over \$300,000. The pre-trial investigation was completed in February 2018, and the indictment was sent to court in October 2018. As of June 2021, no preparatory hearings had taken place at HACC due to defendants' absences.

6. The “Avakov Backpacks Case” (started in 2017)

In 2016, journalists from the “Schemes” program exposed a corruption scheme during the procurement of backpacks for the National Guard, involving the son of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Oleksandr Avakov, former deputy minister Serhii Chebotar, and a representative of the winning tender company. Following investigations by NABU and SAPO, searches and arrests were made in 2017, though the Ministry of Internal Affairs claimed the case was politically motivated. The court released the suspects on personal recognizance, and the investigation sparked broad public resonance.

7. The Viktor Yanukovych Case: Mezhyhirya Embezzlement (started in 2022)

Former president Viktor Yanukovych and his son, Oleksandr, are accused of illegally seizing the Mezhyhirya residence, causing over UAH 540 mn in damage. Yanukovych privatized the state-owned estate through asset reclassification and a controversial 2007 swap, transferring control to family-linked companies. The estate was later returned to the state as a historic park. Charges include embezzlement and bribery, with both Yanukovych and his son under investigation in absentia while residing in Russia.

8. The KRAIAN Factory Case (started in 2016)

Odessa Mayor Hennadiy Trukhanov and seven others are accused of misappropriating over UAH 92 mn of budget funds by purchasing a building at an inflated price. After the Malynovskyi District Court of Odessa acquitted them in 2019, the High Anti-Corruption Court annulled the verdict, and the case is still under substantive review. Trukhanov is suspected of misleading city council deputies and attempting to launder funds through fictitious contracts; currently, the mayor is under electronic monitoring, and the trial is delayed due to organizational reasons.

9. The OASK Case, or “Vovk tapes” (2020–2024)

NABU and SAPO accuse former OASK head Pavlo Vovk and other officials of creating a criminal organization to seize control of Ukraine’s judiciary, based on leaked recordings. Investigators allege the group tried to influence the High Council of Justice and the Judicial Qualification Commission, manipulated court decisions for political and personal gain, and blocked judicial evaluations. In total, over a dozen people were charged, including judges, officials, and ex-members of the HQCJ. The case reached court in June 2022, but substantive hearings only began in April 2024 due to repeated delays by the defense.

10. The Hladkovskyi (Svynarchuk) Case (started in 2019)

NABU and SAPO accuse ex-NSDC deputy head Oleh Hladkovskyi and former defense officials of organizing a 2017 military truck procurement scheme that resulted in a UAH 17.4 mn state overpayment. The contract was awarded to Hladkovskyi’s company, “Bogdan Motors,” despite its trucks failing to meet localization standards. Investigators allege that localization costs were illegally shifted to the state budget, and prices were unjustifiably raised. Hladkovskyi was arrested in 2019 but later fled abroad and was declared wanted in April 2024. He also faces charges for failing to declare his wife’s rental income.

11. The Andriy Derkach Case: \$567K from Russian Intelligence (started in 2022)

Ex-MP Andriy Derkach is accused of receiving at least \$567,000 from Russian intelligence services to discredit Ukraine, damage diplomatic relations, and hinder integration with the EU and NATO. A former regional party member and sanctioned by the U.S., Derkach organized disinformation campaigns, including releasing alleged recordings of Ukrainian and international leaders. He faces charges under Ukraine’s criminal code and is wanted in absentia, having been stripped of

citizenship and parliamentary mandate. U.S. authorities also pursue him for money laundering and sanctions violations, with potential sentences up to 30 years.

12. The Yurchenko Case (started in 2020)

MP Oleksandr Yurchenko is accused of taking a bribe to push legislative changes favoring a foreign company and bribing other deputies, facing 8 to 12 years in prison. As head of a waste management subcommittee, he allegedly demanded \$13,000 for himself and \$200,000 for others to support “green tariffs” for waste-processing firms. NABU exposed the scheme in a 2020 undercover operation, though the investigation faced delays. Yurchenko denies the charges, was expelled from his party, but still holds his seat.

13. The Kolomoiskyi (PryvatBank) Case (started in 2023)

Oligarch Ihor Kolomoiskyi and five former PrivatBank executives are accused of embezzling UAH 9.2 bn in early 2015 under the guise of "financial recovery." Investigators allege they used fake documents to funnel funds through an offshore company, ultimately returning the money to Kolomoiskyi's account to increase his bank stake. The case, one of NABU's largest, involves charges of embezzlement, money laundering, and forgery. Despite attempts, courts have blocked asset seizures. Kolomoiskyi is also under investigation in other high-profile cases and remains in pretrial detention.

14. The Vasyl Lozynskyi Case (started in 2023)

Former Deputy Minister for Regional Development Vasyl Lozynskyi is suspected of soliciting and receiving a \$400,000 bribe in exchange for facilitating contracts for overpriced heating equipment. According to NABU-SAP, Lozynskyi was to receive a 7–10% “kickback” on each deal, while contractors inflated prices by 25–30%. The cash was transferred from Lviv to Kyiv, but the handover was intercepted — NABU detained the middleman and later Lozynskyi himself. He is charged under Article 368, Part 4 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine.

15. The Vsevolod Kniaziev Case (started in 2023)

Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Vsevolod Kniaziev is on trial for allegedly leading a bribery scheme to influence court decisions. In May 2023, NABU caught him receiving part of a \$2.7 mn bribe, tied to a favorable ruling for oligarch Kostyantyn Zhevago's mining company. Investigators

say Kniaziev coordinated with lawyer Oleh Horetskyi and notary Kyrylo Horburov to solicit bribes and distribute them among judges. Horetskyi has pleaded guilty and received a suspended sentence. Kniaziev was removed from office, charged under Article 368-4 of the Criminal Code, and faces up to 12 years in prison. Disciplinary proceedings also led to his dismissal as a judge.

16. The Pavlo Kyrylenko Case: UAH 72 mn in Undeclared Assets (started in 2024)

Head of Ukraine's Antimonopoly Committee Pavlo Kyrylenko is accused of illicit enrichment worth over UAH 72 mn — including 7 apartments, a house, commercial spaces, and a BMW — despite officially earning only UAH 4.7 mn with his wife. Most assets were registered to his in-laws, though prosecutors claim Kyrylenko used them himself. Properties were bought at suspiciously low prices and omitted from asset declarations. He is charged under Articles 368-5 and 366-2 of the Criminal Code; his wife is accused of aiding the scheme. Despite this, Kyrylenko joined Ukraine's 2024 EU talks delegation.

17. The Oleksiy Nosov Case: \$200K Bribe Attempt to Shift NABU Investigation (started in 2024)

Oleksiy Nosov, a lawyer formerly with the “Miller” law firm, is accused by NABU-SAP of offering a \$200,000 bribe to officials to transfer a high-profile fraud case involving his client, Yuliya Frolova, from NABU to the National Police. Nosov allegedly planned to pay the bribe in two parts but denies involvement in bribery discussions, with both his firm and the client denying his role in the scheme. He faces up to 8 years in prison if convicted and was dismissed from his firm in June 2024.

18. The Mykola Chaus Case: \$100K Bribe for Leniency (2016–2025)

Ex-judge Mykola Chaus was convicted for requesting \$100,000 to grant probation in a drug trafficking case. Caught in a bribery sting by NABU in 2016, with cash hidden in jars, he fled to Moldova but was later found in Ukraine. Despite claiming provocation by law enforcement and denying guilt, the court sentenced him to 10 years imprisonment with asset confiscation; this was later reduced to 8.5 years on appeal. The case revealed complex interactions involving covert agents and disputed claims of entrapment.

19. Case of Former Minister of Agrarian Policy Mykola Solskyi (started in 2024)

Mykola Solskyi is suspected of illegally seizing land in Sumy worth over UAH 290 mn by manipulating documents to auction state-owned land. His associates, including deputy Markiyan

Dmytrashevych, helped remove academy leadership and add lands to a free-use list. Other involved parties include former Geocadastre head Oleksandr Kolotilin and private firm directors. The group also allegedly tried to seize an additional UAH 190 mn worth of land. The case is under pre-trial investigation at the High Anti-Corruption Court.

20. Case of Former MP Iryna Kormyshkina on Illegal Enrichment (started in 2024)

Iryna Kormyshkina is accused of illegal enrichment and false asset declaration. Between 2021–2022, she allegedly acquired assets exceeding her lawful income by over UAH 20 mn, which she tried to legitimize as gifts from her father. These assets were later transferred as loans to her husband, who used them to buy a house and land in Odesa, not declared in their 2023 asset reports. Charges include illegal enrichment and falsification of declarations. Kormyshkina resigned from parliament in February 2025 and now leads supervisory boards in her family business.

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