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SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

Vitaliy Portnykov | NOTES FOR MARCH

# A TIME OF NEGOTIATIONS AND BOMBING



**Vitaliy Portnykov – leading Ukrainian political commentator, writer, and journalist.**

Practically the entire month of March was spent trying to revive the negotiation process and find opportunities for a ceasefire in Ukraine. What is the result? I am writing this text after the next air alert has been canceled and against the backdrop of information about massive strikes on Kharkiv and fires in this large Ukrainian city. Before that, there were massive strikes and fires in Kropyvnytskyi, Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv, Odesa... So, frankly, there is no real ceasefire or truce to speak of.

Well, in international politics, there are often situations when public statements and diplomatic initiatives serve only as a cover for deeper strategic intentions. The recent events related to the Trump-Zelensky conflict in the Oval Office and several rounds of talks in Saudi Arabia are a vivid example of such a smokescreen that hides US President Donald Trump's lack of effective tools to put pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin or his unwillingness to use the available levers of influence.

After the talks between the American and Ukrainian delegations in Jeddah and the proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, Russian Presidential Aide for Foreign Policy Yuri Ushakov held consultations with his American counterpart Mike Volz. Ushakov emphasized that Russia was not interested in a temporary ceasefire, stressing the desire for a long-term peaceful settlement that would take into account Russia's "legitimate" interests and "con-

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cerns." He characterized the proposal for a temporary ceasefire agreed upon between the American and Ukrainian delegations as only providing a temporary respite for the Ukrainian military.

These statements indicate that the Kremlin sees no point in short-term measures and insists on resolving the conflict on its own terms. Putin likely discussed these terms with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko during his visit to Moscow, which coincided with the arrival of US Special Representative Steve Witkoff in the Russian capital.

Putin's behavior demonstrates his belief that Trump is in a weak position because of his promises to end the Russian-Ukrainian war quickly, but has no real ability to do so without accepting Russia's conditions for a cessation of hostilities and the future of Ukraine. Witkoff, whom Ushakov also characterized as a person who is not an intermediary in Russian-American relations, is interesting to Putin and his entourage only in terms of financial offers they would like to make to the American president through a person close to Trump.

Putin may believe that he can corrupt Trump and his inner circle by convincing them of the need to abandon support for Ukraine and accept that Russia can act at its own discretion in the post-Soviet space. To reinforce this position, Steve Witkoff may be offered serious financial ideas that, in Putin's opinion, should convince the American leadership of the benefits of abandoning further support for Ukraine. Of course, no one said that such attempts by Putin will really achieve their goal, but they may help the Russian ruler in dragging out ne-

gotiations. And Trump himself recently openly stated that Putin is stalling for time.

Yuri Ushakov clearly stated to the US President's national security assistant that Russia is not interested in a temporary truce on the Russian-Ukrainian front. But not because Russia is interested in peace, as we understand it. Putin's goal is to destroy Ukrainian statehood. This emphasizes the Kremlin's tough stance and its unwillingness to make compromises that do not meet its strategic interests. But negotiations are welcome! Putin simply seeks to conduct these negotiations in the context of ongoing hostilities. This significantly differs from Trump's approach, who would like to first agree on a ceasefire and only then begin a lengthy negotiation process. However, Putin has twice refused Trump a ceasefire, and negotiations between the Russian and American delegations have not brought us closer to it.

Sanctions tools in US-Russian relations, as the last three years have shown, are also not effective enough to ensure a rapid collapse of the Russian economy and the Kremlin's willingness to agree to a temporary truce or cessation of hostilities. Sanctions can work, but this requires a longer and more serious period of work with the Kremlin, time that Donald Trump, who would like to achieve a ceasefire quickly, does not have.

The most interesting thing after all these negotiations will be whether Trump will recognize the fact that Putin does not need a truce, which will not ensure the fulfillment of his main goal – the destruction of the Ukrainian state and the occupation of its territory.

Given the above, it becomes obvio-



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us that without real levers of influence and readiness for tough actions, diplomatic efforts may remain fruitless. The international community must be aware of the Kremlin’s true intentions and be ready to take adequate measures in response to Russia’s aggressive policy.

In this context, it is important for the United States to realize the need to increase sanctions and military pressure on Russia. Any attempts to negotiate with the Kremlin without real mechanisms of influence only give Putin additional time to implement his strategic plans.

We should not forget about the position of Ukraine’s and the United States’ European partners. Key European Union countries, such as Germany and France, have been more cautious than the Americans throughout the war, but recent events have shown a gradual

shift in rhetoric to a tougher one. This is due, in part, to the realization that any concession to Putin only encourages him to further aggressive actions and fear that European countries could become victims of such actions. It is not without reason that the German Bundestag in the last weeks before the start of the new government of Friedrich Merz created the conditions for increasing the country’s military budget, and the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, proposed an ambitious plan for rearmament of Europe for as much as 800 billion euros.

France, which in the initial stages tried to play the role of a mediator between Ukraine and Russia, is now taking initiatives to increase military assistance to Kyiv, which is evidence of a change in approaches. Paris is now even taking the initiative to possi-

bly deploy its own nuclear weapons in other European countries – which, undoubtedly, can change the very architecture of European security and “play it safe” if the United States of the time of Donald Trump really “leaves” Europe and is no longer interested in the European future.

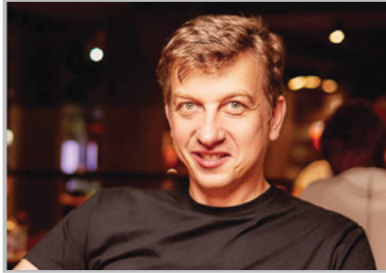
But the most important thing now is how the American president will behave if his diplomatic efforts do not lead to the desired results. Trump can either change his tactics towards Ukraine, provide Kyiv with more weapons and increase financial assistance, or limit himself to symbolic statements without real action. In this context, the main question is whether Washington, together with its allies, is ready to take decisive action aimed at weakening the aggressor or will continue attempts to reach a compromise with the Kremlin.



SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

Oles Doniy

# COERCION TO NEGOTIATE



**Oles Doniy –  
Ukrainian journalist, TV  
presenter, politician,  
public and cultural figure.**

Donald Trump's voters should be satisfied with the first statements and actions of their elected representative as the second president-elect. Hyperbolic statements, harsh tone, self-confidence, geopolitical economic pragmatism bordering on cynicism – this is what voters loved and voted for him for. Even if the ambitions to annex Canada or Danish Greenland look completely unrealistic during his presidency, even the voicing of such imperial plans is already affecting the anti-liberal nationalist electorate, which has largely become the core of Trumpism. The launched “tariff war” against the allies is no longer a statement, but a fully official decision, which, again, meets electoral expectations. After all, in contrast to the “globalist” concept, Trump is a vivid example of “isolationism,” which does not involve sentiment even for close allies. If “globalism” was aimed at promoting “American values” around the world, and, accordingly, significant costs for those outside the United States, “isolationism” implies a different scheme: minimizing costs to the outside, maximizing the enrichment of both the state as a whole and its components: business structures, citizens, etc. This is how Trump views the Russian-Ukrainian war, which is far from being a priority for him: not to support related ideological values, but to reduce costs. Money, not ideas. This was the reason for his statements while still a presidential candidate about his readiness to stop the war in 24 hours. Reality corrects these bravura statements about the time dimension, but Trump is sticking to the direction of trying to stop the war. His voters

should like this approach. After all, this is a demonstration of an attempt to fulfill election promises.

Facts are stubborn things, and these facts show that the negotiations that have begun between the United States, Ukraine, and the aggressor country, Russia, were initiated by the United States, not by the states involved in the war. Neither Ukraine nor Russia showed any active interest in this issue. Ukraine is a victim country, and logically sees justice only in the return of all Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia, compensation for all the damage caused by Russia, and guarantees of non-repetition of similar aggression by Russia. The Kremlin is not going to do any of the above. Moreover, the fulfillment of all these conditions looks like a very distant prospect. So what then is Ukraine's interest in the negotiation process? Russia also shows no great desire to end the war. Their army is advancing, albeit with heavy losses and minimal progress. For Vladimir Putin personally, the war feeds him, adds to his weight both inside and outside the country. Ukraine has not been broken, Ukrainians will not accept the postulates of the “Russian world,” so why does Russia need a negotiation process? It seems that the United States, or rather the new presidential administration, wants to “freeze” the war and “reconcile” the most. In fact, there is a “compulsion to negotiate,” at least in relation to Ukraine.

The non-diplomatic spat in the Oval Office on February 28 was interpreted by Ukrainians as initiated by US Vice President J.D. Vance. However, there are reasonable assumptions that the Ukrainian side was deliberately preparing to disrupt the negotiations. At the very least, it could have been foreseen in advance that the presence of Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States Oksana Markarova in the room could be a dangerous trigger. On September 23, 2024, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the Scranton Army Ammunition Plant in Scranton, Pennsylvania, where the 155-caliber shells we need so much are manufactured. This seemingly absolutely necessary visit turned into an unprecedented scandal. A number of senators and congressmen, including Speaker

of the House Mike Johnson, publicly demanded that Ambassador Markarova be recalled from her post. The thing was that only representatives of the Democratic Party establishment, including Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, took part in this visit from the American side. There was not a single representative of the Republican Party, which, in the midst of the election race, looked not like a state visit but a campaign visit, and in one of the “swing states.” So the Republicans did not miss the opportunity to make a whole PR campaign about it. The party won the presidential election, and its leading figures demanded the recall of the Ukrainian ambassador. One can assume that the Ukrainian government is short-staffed and cannot quickly carry out such a rotation. One might assume that pride and self-confidence did not allow the Ukrainian authorities to heed this demand. But they could not have been unaware of the dissatisfaction and categorical rejection of Markarova in the new presidential administration. And even though the country's ambassador should have been present according to protocol, there is a concept in diplomacy called “diplomatic illness” for a reason. So if the Ukrainian side had been really interested in a successful negotiation process (and at that stage it was about signing an agreement on rare earth metals), Markarova would have “fallen ill” and not been an irritant. Instead, the quarrel began from the moment Vance began to recall that unsuccessful trip to the Pennsylvania plant. Although he did not mention Markarova's name, he recounted the details of the scandalous visit, which ultimately gave Zelenskyy a reason to show emotion, interrupt the US President, and ultimately disrupt the negotiation process at that stage.

By the way, Markarova continues to serve as a “trigger.” Under pressure from his European allies, Volodymyr Zelenskyy soon posted a message on social media that could be interpreted as an actual apology: “My team and I are ready to work under the strong leadership of President Trump for a lasting peace.” In Congress, Donald Trump announced that he had received a letter from the President of Ukraine and quoted it. Instead, Ukrai-



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**ГРОМАДА**

# ФАРБОВАНИЙ ЛИС

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ne's ambassador to the United States emphasized that it was not a letter at all, and Trump only read out a post from social media, effectively correcting or even denying the words of the president of the country in which she holds a diplomatic post. It is good that the US administration did not stir up a new conflict this time, although the pretext was thrown up inadvertently.

It can be assumed that the Ukrainian government may try to use this tactic again. It is not known what arguments the US administration is using to get the Ukrainian side to the negotiating table in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Whether it is threats to stop all financial and military support or some kind of compromising material on the current government, the fact is that the official Ukrainian delegation is sitting down at the negotiating table. The trouble is that any "reconciliation" or "freeze" offered by the American side is essentially an honorable surrender of Ukraine, i.e., acceptance of the status quo, which means that our occupied lands

will continue to remain under the heel of the aggressor. The negotiations that ended on March 25, although they contain an agreement to mutually refrain from destroying energy infrastructure (which is more our vulnerability), otherwise contribute to the process of starting to lift economic sanctions against Russia, starting with agricultural products, and even against one of the Russian banks.

One of the members of the Ukrainian parliament made public the content of the agreement on the establishment of the US-Ukraine Reconstruction Investment Fund, which can be interpreted in the spirit of neocolonialism. After all, Ukraine is obliged to contribute 50% of its mineral production to the fund, and the US contribution is considered to be made at the expense of the funds provided to Ukraine during the war. The deputy who made the agreement public is not formally a member of the ruling Servant of the People party, and it can be assumed that the "leak" was deliberately

made by the Ukrainian authorities to either slow down the process again or try to influence its correction. In conclusion, the negotiations have a chance to last for a very long time, and there is little in the way of state interests in the outcome of the negotiations. In addition, the Ukrainian government is extremely reluctant to hold elections, and the issue of elections will arise if it comes to stopping the shelling, at least of major cities. So in this case, strangely enough, the private and mercantile interests of the Ukrainian authorities coincided with the state interests, according to which no concessions can be made to the enemy. Therefore, the negotiation process looks like it will be a long one. Despite the "compulsion to negotiate".

To make our position in the negotiations stronger, our task remains the same: we need to become stronger: armed, economically, and socially. To be less dependent on our allies.

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SPECIAL FOR HROMADA

FR. ROMAN BEBESIUK | SPIRITUAL TREASURY

# FASTING IS THE WAY TO THE RESURRECTION



**Fr. Ilic. Roman Bebesiuk – priest of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in San Francisco and the Church of St. Volodymyr in Santa Clara**

Dear readers! Since last time we started our journey through the beautiful streets and ended up in the parish of the Immaculate Conception, let's continue our journey along the spiritual path of Lent, which prepares us for the great day – the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Probably each of us has heard the word “fast” and it is associated in our minds as something that limits us. Is this really the case?

Let's look back to the Old Testament, where our forefathers Adam and Eve enjoyed life in the presence of God. They did not need anything because Lord had provided for them. However, He gave them a commandment that they did not keep and were expelled from paradise with great consequences (*Genesis 2:16-17, 3:23-24*). Even so, the Lord did not abandon them. As we can see, there was already a first fast, which consisted of obedience and submission to the Lord.

Thus, in fasting it is very important to listen to the Lord, who loves us unconditionally and continues to call us to live in His presence. Fasting is also an opportunity to get closer to the Lord, to feel His care and love. However, our eternal enemy, the devil (his name comes from the Greek word δίαβολος, which means “one who divides”), works for the kingdom of darkness and makes every effort to keep us from

entering the kingdom of God, to keep us from experiencing God's love. He understands that if we become closer to the Lord, he loses his power over us. Therefore, he uses his entire arsenal to influence our lives so that other things take the place of the Lord in our hearts.

The devil works through our senses because he knows that our bodies are weak and we can be tempted quickly. What should we do? Jesus says: “Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation, for the spirit is vigorous, but the body is weak” (*Matthew 26:41*). Why? Because it is the vigilance over our thoughts and the heart lifted up to the Lord in prayer that fills us with His presence.

Let's also look at the desert where the devil tempted our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. How did Jesus respond? He responded with words from the Holy Scriptures: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (*Matthew 4:4*). This is also a good example for us to read the Word of God, because, as St. Jerome said: “Whoever does not know the Scriptures does not know Christ.”

We should again pay attention to Jesus, who spent his entire earthly life, 33 years, helping and supporting everyone and gave us the commandment of love: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you” (*John 13:34*). We can see that these elements – prayer, almsgiving, and the Word of God – are important in the life of a Christian and help us to draw closer to the Lord and to be in His presence.

However, an important factor is also our repentance – the realization that I am lost and need the Lord to show me the way of salvation. For it is because of sin that we are lost in life: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Romans 3:23*).

Surely some of us have been lost in the woods or in the mountains and cried out: “Help!” The realization of one's lostness and a burning desire to be saved is repentance. The Lord took care of this, He established the Sacrament of Confession, saying to the apostles: “Whosoever you forgive, they will be forgiven; and whomever you re-

tain, they will be retained” (*John 20:23*). So, in Confession we save our souls. Confession is a return to the fatherly arms of a just and loving Heavenly Father (*Luke 15:20-24*).

You may ask: why do we have food restrictions during Lent? When we give up something that we love very much, we develop willpower, thanks to which we can resist temptations that aim to keep us away from the Lord. The Apostle Paul writes: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (*Phil. 4:13*).

So let's take the first step. Let's find a place of silence, plunge into the depths of our hearts and see what is going on and what is there. Most importantly, is the Lord there? And let's not be afraid to take steps towards our salvation.

You are probably interested in the rules of fasting in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. So here they are:

The rules of fasting in the UGCC are regulated, in particular, by can. 115 of the particular law.

The purpose of the penitential practice of fasting, repentance, and abstinence is to make amends for sins committed and to achieve greater perfection for personal sanctification. This practice is the oldest tradition of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

During Lent, all the faithful are obliged to fast, except for a few categories of people, which we will discuss below.

When and how should we fast?

- on the first day of Lent and Good Friday – a strict fast, i.e., one should refrain from eating meat and dairy products and eggs, as well as dishes containing these products;
- in the first week of Lent and during all days of Holy Week, you should refrain from eating meat products and dishes;
- on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of the remaining weeks of Lent, one should refrain from eating meat products and dishes; on Tuesday and Thursday, all types of food are allowed.

Throughout the entire period of Lent, the faithful are obliged to refrain from organizing and participating in noisy parties, weddings, dances, entertainment, and other similar events.



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Who is exempt from the obligation to fast?

There are certain categories of people who are exempt from the obligation to fast. These are:

- children under the age of 14;
- persons who have turned 60 years old;
- seriously ill people;
- pregnant women;
- mothers after childbirth and those who are breastfeeding;

- those who are traveling (if the travel time exceeds 8 hours);
- those who work hard;
- those who eat from the table of others;
- the poor who live on alms.

In some cases, the local hierarch may exempt from the obligation to fast, encouraging the faithful to perform acts of piety and charity.

Let us remember that fasting is not a diet, not a therapy for losing weight.

It is a meeting with the Lord and a therapy to improve the health of the soul and our relationship with the Lord and with our neighbors.

May the Lord bless everyone and fulfill good intentions for His glory. I wish you all a fruitful Lent so that you may meet the Risen Christ in joy, peace and victory!

Amen.

# RUSSIAN ROULETTE ON A ROLLER COASTER

**Nadia Banchik –**  
*US correspondent for*  
**"Hromada"**

***The first round of telephone talks between US President Donald Trump and Russian dictator Vladimir Putin (March 18) and between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (March 19) did not result in even a partial ceasefire. Have they agreed to negotiate further? On what and why?***

**Putin is playing Trump as his "trump card"**

President Donald Trump (*a strange coincidence: trump means "trump card"*), who has created an image of a master of business deals, has made one of his most important election promises dependent on the master of special psychological operations, the KGB-FSB. By promising to stop, in his words, "horrific murders," deliberately refusing to distinguish between aggressor and victim, he seemed to be hoping to appease the evil dictator and aggressor. How the master of business deals appeased the master of provocations can only be guessed from some of the information about this conversation.

When I searched for an official announcement of the official phone call with Putin on the White House's official website while writing this article (March 21-22), I did not find it. Neither by looking through the "News" section chronologically, nor by using the Internet search "Trump – Putin phone call". There is a press release about the conversation with Zelenskyy, but there is no press release about the conversation with Putin!

Doesn't this lack of an official press release indicate that Trump himself considers these talks to be not as "great" as he initially thought?

On the Russian dictator's official website, everything is in order: the message about the conversation with Trump is in its chronological place. With all the "detailed and sincere exchange of views," "commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict" and, of course, the need to get rid of the "root causes of the crisis" and to take into account "Russia's legitimate security interests."

Of course, Putin pointed to the "se-

rious risks associated with the inability to reach an agreement with the 'Kyiv regime'" that has already "repeatedly sabotaged and violated the agreements reached" (*when was this? And who violated the Minsk agreements, which were deliberately ambiguous to trap the Ukrainian side? Didn't the then-newly elected President Zelenskyy unilaterally order the fulfillment of these agreements by withdrawing troops in four sections of the then-current contact line, which subsequently facilitated the full-scale invasion and partial seizure of southern Ukraine?*)

"Attention is drawn to the barbaric crimes of a terrorist nature committed by Ukrainian militants against the civilian population of the Kursk region" (*probably confused with Bucha, where it was not 'Ukrainian militants' who committed unheard-of crimes?*).

"It was emphasized that a key condition for preventing the escalation of the conflict and working towards its resolution through political and diplomatic means should be a complete cessation of foreign military assistance and the provision of intelligence information to Kyiv" – but not a word about the obligation to cut off supplies to Russia from North Korea, Iran and China.

However, the most important aspect of the talks, in my opinion, seems to be the short, unspoken notes (*sorry for the long quote, but in my opinion, this is where the main risks, if not dangers, for the United States and the world order lie*):

Putin and Trump "touched upon other issues on the international agenda, including the situation in the Middle East and the Red Sea region. They will make joint efforts to stabilize the situation in crisis areas, establish cooperation on nuclear non-proliferation and global security. This, in turn, will help improve the overall atmosphere of Russian-American relations. One positive example is the solidarity vote at the UN on the resolution on the Ukrainian conflict (*yes, that's right! The United States voted in solidarity not only with Russia, which is recognized as an aggressor by most countries, but also with North Korea and Iran; Israel, in my opinion, was forced to join this "coalition" because it is completely dependent on Trump, and under Biden it either abstained or supported the re-*

*cognition of Russia as an aggressor!*)

Mutual interest in normalizing bilateral relations was expressed in light of the "special responsibility of Russia and the United States for ensuring security and stability in the world. In this context, a wide range of areas in which our countries could establish cooperation was considered. We discussed a number of ideas that could lead to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation in the economy and energy sector."

All US presidents, from George W. Bush to Biden, started with similar proposals and agreements with the post-Soviet Russian Federation. At the same time, all of them excluded the real role of Russia in destabilizing these regions: the saturation of terrorist groups subordinated to the FSB-GRU, covert and sometimes open support for local "guerrillas" such as the Houthis, demonstrative support for Hamas and Hezbollah – all US presidents believed that constructive proposals on mutual responsibility for maintaining "stability" in these regions would distract Russia from its traditional destructive role there.

Proposals for nuclear weapons control are not worth analyzing (*every US president has included such proposals in his attempts to "reset" relations with Russia*). Everyone has seen who has been threatening the world with the use of nuclear weapons since the beginning of the war with Ukraine in 2014, and it is more than naive to hope that these proposals will prevent Russia from further blackmail.

Thus, Putin is making exactly the same demands and "proposals" that he has made to previous US presidents. This is nothing new!

Trump is now stepping on the same rake, only, unlike his predecessors, who were only naive but did not deviate from fundamental American values, he is able to sacrifice these values to the Russian dictator. Why?

Why did Trump, with his campaign promises and subsequent actions, make himself completely dependent on the capricious Russian dictator and ignore the experience of all his predecessors?

Most importantly, is it even possible to hope that Trump, as a mediator, will achieve the end of what he himself promised to be "brutal killings" witho-



ut specifying who is responsible for these killings?

So far, we have watched in horror as Trump, with a zeal that is clearly better used, tries to destroy the very foundation on which the United States stands. Is this intentional, to appease Putin, or is it a side effect, and his intentions are actually different?

This is how a whole series of questions arise that, at first glance, are not very related. Is the long-overdue reduction of the overly bloated state apparatus an attempt to destroy the system of public administration? Is it an attempt to regulate the US information space in compliance with the First Amendment or an attempt to establish control over this space? Impartial, equidistant mediation in the Russian-Ukrainian war – or an attempt to destroy the existing world order and push it to the point where uncontrolled territorial claims can begin?

Let's try to see through the fog of omissions and chaotic actions – to a certain point.

#### **Testing powers, checks, and balances**

From the first day of his inauguration, the United States and the world have watched – some with horror, others with admiration – as the 47<sup>th</sup> president acts, as if in the words of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam about Stalin: “forges order after order.” As if he were Stalin, Trump rules the country, issuing dozens of different presidential orders one after another, every day, without regard for the other branches of government – the legislative and judicial.

Following the cancellation of USAID, it was the turn of the Voice of America and Radio Liberty – the only state-owned media outlets in the United States that ensured America's information influence in the world and opposed dictators with the help of truthful information. Moreover, according to many journalists, it was these media outlets that created the highest journalistic standards and served as some of the most reliable sources of information.

However, Trump and his supporters argued for the closure of state funding for these sources by saying that they are allegedly “captured by radical left forces.” Is this true? The answer is probably no, both media outlets strive to cover issues as objectively as possible from all possible points of view. However, employees of these media outlets raised the question from a different angle: do not such arguments violate the First Amendment

on freedom of speech? (*After all, no president, whether Democrat or Republican, has even raised questions about closing any media outlet, in particular, Obama did not try to close the “far-right”, in his opinion, Fox News!*)

From the first day of his entry into the White House, Trump, acting through a newly created ministry or advisory body – the “Department of Government Efficiency” – has been laying off government employees and civil servants; to date, the number has exceeded hundreds of thousands.

An article in USA Today provides a detailed chronology of the process of mass layoffs and their appeals through the courts. It presents a picture of actions aimed at radically reducing the state apparatus, but extremely inconsistent, without a strategy on how and to what extent to reduce it. Such actions lead to the termination of the functioning of extremely important state services, in particular, providing for war veterans, predicting natural disasters, protecting national reserves, etc. And dismissals without taking into account the legislation in labor activities lead to numerous court appeals.

The cuts reached such “pillars” of the American state security system as “Social Security”, Medicare (*federal health insurance for people over 65*) and, especially, Medicaid – health insurance for people with low incomes, which is distributed between the federal and state budgets, and also, at the height of the tax return filing season, thousands of employees of the Internal Revenue Service were laid off. All these actions are irritating to voters of both parties, because they affect the daily lives of millions of Americans. At all meetings with voters, they openly express their dissatisfaction.

However, the main confrontation between the White House and all those affected by layoffs, cuts, and arbitrary actions is through appeals in the courts. In Congress, the Republican majority in both chambers is completely subordinate to Trump, even the “Reagan” wing does not raise a protest, because it is in the minority. The Democrats are also in the minority and did not even take the opportunity to thwart Trump's plan to approve government funding until the end of the current fiscal year, because they feared that this could lead to a final shutdown of the government for an indefinite period. In such circumstances, only the judicial branch of power has taken on the role of the final element of the half-demolished system of checks and balances. It can be controlled by the president

only partially – through the Department of Justice and the system of prosecutors. Trump, through “his” Attorney General Pam Bondi, has, of course, already fired all prosecutors who had contact not only with his criminal cases, but also with every participant in the coup attempt on January 6, 2021.

He has also stripped all of his most important political opponents of their state secrets clearance, from Hillary Clinton to Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger (*former Republican members of Congress who participated in his impeachments*). This, by the way, also defines the limits to which the president can take revenge on his opponents: he cannot harm them more significantly.

Judges do not obey anyone. This is what causes the greatest anger of Trump and Trumpists. They are currently looking for opportunities to influence rebellious judges. In particular, they have put forward the idea of “impeaching” judges. The Supreme Court has refused to even consider the possibility of this.

In short, the courts are currently the main force in the fight against the endless “order-making.” Experts are already beginning to call the whole situation a “constitutional crisis.” Its essence lies in whether it will be possible to redefine the boundaries between the powers of the president, Congress, and the judicial branch.

#### **Trump's enchanted spiral**

Having briefly listed Trump's actions and the constitutional crisis he has caused, let's return to the question: why is the 47<sup>th</sup> president doing this? Why is he throwing the state administration into chaos? Why is he eliminating or reducing the intelligence departments that were responsible for countering Russian threats, including in cyberspace (*I touched on this in a previous article*)? Why does he act in domestic and foreign policy as if he were in cahoots with Putin?

Some experts, primarily defectors from post-Soviet agencies, indicate that Trump was recruited by the KGB back in 1987, and since then has been used as a “trump card” in various deals to buy up the elite real estate of Trump the developer by Russian oligarchs (*and buy him out of bankruptcy*) before he was nominated as president of the most powerful state, the eternal enemy of these “post-Soviet” agencies.

However, in my opinion, even if Trump's connection with the Russian Federation had not been confirmed, he would most likely have done the same.

Because with his actions, he has driven himself into a vicious spiral sin-

ce his first presidency.

From his first campaign speeches in 2015 – 2016, he began to “unobtrusively” emphasize his “good relations” with the Russian leader – which at the time sounded contrary to his political rival Hillary Clinton (*a completely permissible method of political struggle*) and helped to rally American supporters of the Russian Federation around him. However, this immediately aroused suspicion among his opponents, primarily members of Congress – Democrats, who only needed a reason to inflame political passions. But, it was even more important – his words and actions aroused suspicion among experts, journalists and intelligence officers, independent of party passions. Thus arose the first investigation into the “possible collusion” of the Trump campaign headquarters with the Russian Federation – the investigation of special prosecutor Mueller. It ended with the establishment of the fact of Russian interference in the electoral process, but was suddenly nullified at the final stage, without answering the main question of the entire investigation: was there a conspiracy? Instead of an answer, there were vague chatter about the immunity of the incumbent president from criminal prosecution.

However, since then, Trump has begun to use the tactic of self-defense: the best defense is an attack. He began his war against everyone who not only investigated him, but also simply criticized him: attacks on the media, journalists, Democrats, the judiciary, etc. The further he went, the more chaotic and sharper both sides acted – and this war, in the end, became one of the decisive factors in his defeat in 2020.

Since then, the spiral of mutual persecution, confrontation, and trials has only expanded. Since an essential element of it was Trump’s accusations of ties to the Russian Federation, he increasingly directed the spearhead of his own war against all elements of the US institutional system that, in one way or another, oppose the Russian Federation as a national threat.

Trump either really believed that the

“Russian threat” to the United States was being deliberately exaggerated by his political opponents from both parties, or he was cleverly downplaying this threat, trying to break out of the spiral, but the consequences are exactly what we are seeing: his personal fears and thirst for revenge have merged with all the pro-Russian elements in the United States, in mutual use. Trump personally depends on the abolition of the entire “deep state” that dared to question him. Since this, in fact, non-existent, “deep state” (*in fact, intelligence professionals, FBI investigators, specialists in how to fight tax abuses, etc.*) opposed, among other threats to national security, also the Russian Federation, then Trump quite logically resorted to the systematic destruction of this “deep state”. And the fact that the system of checks and balances – the fundamental principles of American democracy – is being destroyed along with it – so be it! Which is Putin’s most cherished dream!

There is no way out of such a spiral except to destroy it. Therefore, will Trump manage to destroy it? Or, on the contrary, will it persist, and Trump will ultimately suffer defeat or at least slightly suspend his destructive ardor, because the system of checks and balances will stand? The very existence of the American democratic system has become dependent on how the constitutional crisis is resolved.

#### Passionate mediator

Trump’s attitude towards the Russian-Ukrainian war will ultimately depend on how the constitutional crisis in the United States, caused by the Trump spiral (*among other more objective processes that led to the global clash of the Russian Federation with crisis phenomena and democratic systems*), is resolved.

He currently finds himself in a narrow corridor between the Scylla of his relations with the Russian Federation (*and with all elements of the US systemic institutions that confront the Russian threat*) and the Charybdis of his own promises to end this war. According to various polls, the majority of American society is against surrender-

ing Ukraine’s defense, because they see this as surrendering the interests of American allies, that is, the bankruptcy of American reliability. Therefore, Trump cannot openly play along with Putin in fulfilling his demands.

However, is he interested in ensuring Ukraine’s victory? In my opinion, not at all. Firstly, this was proclaimed as his strategic goal by his political opponent Joe Biden, and it is none of Trump’s business that Biden’s proclamation did not come true, not least because of the indecision of the Biden administration itself – Trump should have nothing to do with Biden, because from Trump’s point of view, Biden is to blame for both the fact that the war started and the fact that it did not end. Well, no words about Ukraine’s victory! No words about who actually started the war – only about “stopping the killings”!

Secondly, Trump does not believe that Ukraine’s victory can lead to the defeat of the Russian Federation, and therefore to his own exit from the aforementioned spiral. And if the Russian Federation cannot be defeated, Putin’s spiral will only intensify its pressure on him.

What is left for him? What some political scientists called an “honorably draw” – “honor” alone will not be enough for both Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Each side will have its own survival in mind first and foremost, but only for Ukraine will survival be tantamount to existential existence as an independent state.

There are too many factors here to determine how events will develop. They will fluctuate, as if in a stormy ocean, between two extremes. Between the best option – a temporary cessation of the hot stage of the war where it will end up, as a result of Trump’s pressure on both sides (*if he manages to set the limits of what is permissible within the US and if both warring parties become exhausted*) – and, at worst... something similar to what happened in the 1930s (*if Trump manages to overthrow the system of checks and balances*).

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# CHAPLAINCY AND VOLUNTEERING

## Archpriest

**Dr. Vasyl Pasichnyk –**  
*pastor of the Church of the  
 Three Saints in  
 Ivano-Frankivsk, Synkel for  
 Chaplaincy, psychologist,  
 military and medical chaplain*

Recently, at the invitation of Fr. Roman Babesiuk, I visited the Ukrainian church community in San Jose, California. On the occasion, I met with the parishioners. A request was made to write an article for the Hromada newspaper. I am happy to share some of my experience of military chaplaincy and volunteering.

I became a chaplain from the beginning of the full-scale war. This is despite the fact that I have other important diocesan and parish responsibilities. I realized that it was a war, not a joke. There is no time to be afraid. We have to act! If the enemy comes here, it's better to face the wolf. There were a few other priests who volunteered to become chaplains at that time. One of them, Fr. Vasyl Petriv, even came from Florida on short notice.

I was happy when I met my parishioners and acquaintances among the huge number of those who wanted to fight. At the place of formation of the new military unit, I equipped everything necessary for church services. It was agreed to hold services early on Sundays. I asked other priests to help with Confession. In the middle of the week, I held other services, talks, and conversations (see photo 1 – in the assembly hall after the Way of the Cross).

Everyone was eager to go to the front. They complained that they were kept in the city for a long time. Finally, on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday in 2022, I blessed the guys to go. I distinctly remember a man who is the father of a priest from the United States. He then delivered a VW T3 from his son's collection (see photo 2 – sending off the soldiers from 'school').

I also started contacting friends of priests abroad. Fr. Volodymyr Popyk responded from the United States. From him, I sent the soldiers uniforms, turnstiles, medicines and funds for the purchase of spare parts.

Our Archdiocese established a Humanitarian Cooperation Center, from whose warehouses I delivered food and materials (e.g., generators, mobile gas stoves, etc.). On the basis of my



photo 1 – in the assembly hall after the Way of the Cross



photo 2 – sending off the soldiers from 'school'



photo 3 – nets for a soldier from our parish

church in Ivano-Frankivsk, I organized the production of camouflage nets. With our modest efforts, we produced up to fifty camouflage nets. Everyone

was involved – elders, youth, children (see photo 3 – nets for a soldier from our parish).

According to the report as of Feb-





*photo 4 – St. Nicholas on a box from ammunition*



*photo 5 – cluster missile on the field near our positions*



*photo 6 - the cross in Chervona Polyana*

ruary 2023, the calculation of material and financial assistance that passed through my hands amounted to: 7.291,00 €, 24.850,00 USD, more than 106.000,00 UAH. I was happy about it and thought that my military unit was lucky in a way. Then I just stopped counting. Why? When guys are dying, wasting their health, the total losses in the country...

I started traveling to the East. This is a certain experience with its own challenges and difficulties. The first two I made together with humanitarian aid crews from Ivano-Frankivsk City Council: Zhytomyr, Krasnohrad, Liubivka, Lozova, Kharkiv region, Desna,

Chernihiv region, Poltava, Lozova, positions near the village of Ivanivka (see photo 4 – St. Nicholas on a box from ammunition).

One day, while we were stationed in Lozova, the soldiers offered to take a picture. I was wearing military camouflage, a bulletproof vest and a helmet. I didn't think twice. They hung an assault rifle on my shoulder with the muzzle down. The photo turned out great. I posted it on my Facebook profile and deleted it just two days later. I doubted it because I didn't know how people would react. And indeed, two weeks later I went to my bosses, and they immediately asked me: you are such and

such, how, why? They called, blushed, a priest in public with a weapon in his hands! We can't have that in our hands! It looked like I was looking into the water. I answered, "I'm sorry, I touched a forbidden object, but it was only a wooden dummy, not the real thing... Actually, I understand the criticism, I realized it, I corrected it. That, friends, is our cheerful incident! It's okay, by the grace of God. I remember how happy the guys were over such a silly thing. They were happy, and I was happy. Even in this way, sometimes you have to serve, to become everything to everyone, to support those whose lives and health the hinterland should be very grateful for.

When I traveled to the eastern lands, I was simply fascinated. I had never seen such beautiful black soil before. From the car window, the land glistened like butter even without the sun. At the beginning of the full-scale harvest, the fields were plowed and sown, and there seemed to be no end to them. Entire areas of the world's best arable land! That's when I realized that land is perhaps Ukraine's greatest resource. I came to understand the difference in psychotypes among Ukrainians. This is the purposeful character of the Galicians, on the one hand, polished to a certain extent by the landscapes of mountains and hills, and on the other, the straightforwardness and generous nature of the Easterners. This is great, so all is not lost, and we can enrich each other in return.

Once, during the service for the Prophet Elijah in the village of Mechybyliv, Lozova district, Kharkiv region, we were shot at with cluster bombs. But they missed us by some two hundred meters. Thank God (see photo 5 – cluster missile on the field near our positions). The same day in the afternoon I dedicated a cross built by our soldiers in the neighboring Chervona Polyana. The guys from Broshnev did a great job. The soldiers were delighted to see how the cross saved them more than once during the shelling (see photo 6 – the cross in Chervona Polyana).

The next time I led a service on Savior's Day under the cross, we prayed that the enemy would not be able to detect us. Everyone needed a priest, Confession, and worship. Everything was fine.

I brought all sorts of things. I can just see the commander of one of the platoons, to whom I sent a stove and other things. He was from Bucha, a wonderful man. He took his own life. Wounded auto-aggressive behavior, which can quickly turn into a tragedy

for people with weapons in their hands. We need to listen a lot, to find an approach to our soldiers...

Once I was assigned to bless the positions on the very border with the Belgorod region. I had to run fast in a bulletproof vest and helmet, because in some places the enemy was only 200-250 meters away. The deputy commander from the military plant congratulated us on the “upcoming”, and I handed out medallions dedicated by His Beatitude Sviatoslav. On one side of the medallion is an image of the Mother of God from Zarvanytsia, on the other side is the Archangel Michael. The boys were happy (see photo 7 – medallions on their hands).

The New Year’s Eve service in 2023 was held in the basement. For safety reasons, we were ordered to park cars at a far and different distance from this place. Phones were to be turned off.

In the town of Lyman the service was performed in different households and in small groups. The boys believed that their house survived because, in their opinion, very religious people lived there. On the eastern wall there is a prayer corner with icons and a lamp. Even then the town was half destroyed.

The next interesting moment. On September 27, 2023, I held a service using the old calendar. I had no other opportunity. What did the guys care? The main thing is the festive mood and support (photo 8 – during the Liturgy).

Now about the general state of military chaplaincy in the Archdiocese. At the moment we have six full-time chaplains. All of them work here in the deep rear. Volunteer chaplains go to the eastern positions. We have five of them from the diocese.

Some people have asked: what does this military chaplaincy give? We can only be happy to hear such questions. Isn’t it? The answer is that it is a very valuable experience. I have to share it. This is my job. Who else but me, who else but us? It’s about courage, endurance, strength, humanity, patience, joy, brotherhood, love. Is there anything more valuable than that? Is there?

As a chaplain, I have already had the opportunity to share my experience in communities abroad. People need it. Firstly, we need to thank everyone for supporting active priests in particular. Secondly, we need to answer certain questions and expectations that are born in society.

Here is an example from our commander V. Rymarchuk back in August 2022. Pay close attention to when exactly. Thus, back then, the commander



photo 7 – medallions on their hands



photo 8 – during the Liturgy



photo 9 – after the dedication of two trucks



photo 10 – ruins

commented clearly: “You can see that in the dining room and the guys at the positions have something to eat, we cook everything. The state provides food. All your humanitarian aid is people’s money. The frontline needs very little of it. I need the guys to fight, not to carry food around. When there is a shelling or another redeployment, more than half of the food sent disappears. Tell this to everyone!”

Indeed, as I noticed abroad, people are to some extent exhausted, desperate, because they say much of what they have purchased is lost. Here is the answer, listen to the good words of that commander. I have just retold them. However, some women later objected to me and almost cried, beca-

use there are many who are starving. Okay, I answer, maybe so. You know better, it’s up to you, do as you see fit, but don’t blame anyone for it. In any case, war is not a sanatorium. Do you want to buy off the war and still make money from the fact that you are the most important thing here? Has anyone lost their family or property? Glory to the heroes!

On the way, I met a lot of humanitarian and volunteer crews. You see, volunteering is a spontaneous, partly uncontrolled movement. Instead, the army, with all its problems (because there are people just like us), is a rather structured and organized process. The kitchen, first of all. This is the easiest thing to do. Of course, in the con-





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ditions of warfare, many things are rapidly changing and being destroyed. But the military system is self-healing. Success is ensured by resources and means. That's all.

Of course, I am very grateful to all Ukrainians and our foreign friends, to all people of good will for their joint efforts and unity. We are saving ourselves, we are saving the world. God is

saving us! We believe in it.

I see that we still need tactical and combat gear. We civilians need to raise funds for something real, for example, trucks, pickup trucks, drones (see photo 9 – after the dedication of two trucks). The average age of a vehicle or drone at the front is very short. Basically, my commander is a hundred percent right. But not only that.

What scared me the most was the ruins, the ruins. Who will restore it and how? (See photo 10 – ruins). But let's not talk about that now. We must not despair, we must not give up. We must continue to work together and work hard to win. This is the only way.

Lord God, help us, our hope is in Your strength and help.

# WHAT IS SUCCESS IN THEATER? THE PAINTED FOX. The first play for children in Ukrainian in San Francisco

The answer is clear: a full house, sincere emotions of the audience, laughter and applause! That's how the premiere of the children's play based on Ivan Franko's fairy tale *The Painted Fox* went down.

The newly created Ukrainian amateur theater "**Traveling Stars**", which debuted on the stage of Ukrainian Hall San Francisco last year, actively worked on creating this performance for our youngest audience and gave an incredible time to all present!

The audience was transported to a magical forest where adventures with a cunning fox took place. The guests saw a lot of instructive and funny things, and even after a century Ivan Franko's work fuels the love for Ukrainian fairy tales.

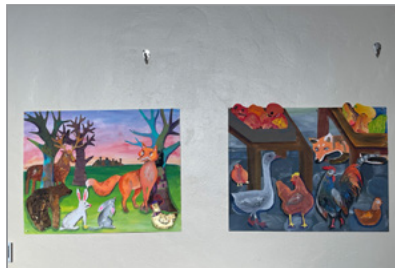
All of this was made possible by the dedicated work and performance of the actors. We sincerely thank the entire team of the "Traveling Stars", in particular the artistic director Ms. **Yelena Bilyak** and the actors and everyone who helped, namely: **Bohdan Pyndus-Pastukh, Natasha Karpenko, Diana Yavorska, Vadzim Pryshchepau, Olena Petrova, Tetiana Lozhnevska, Valia Pashckova, Arkady Kaminski**.

The children of the Ukrainian School of St. Princess Olha under the guidance of Ms. **Olga Krailo** were also actively preparing for the performance. The artists **Sofiya Ohorodnyk** and **Anna Gontar** organized an exhibition of illustrations for the fairy tale with the students, creating an atmosphere of anticipation in the school.

At the end of the performance, a charity auction was held with valuable lots, for which we are sincerely grateful: **Yelena Bilyak, Natalie Kokhanny, Tanya Omelyuk, Anna Gontar, Zhanina Romanchenko 'Kapurova'** and **Natalia Lutsak**.

We would also like to thank **Father Roman Bobesiuk** and the **Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church** for kindly providing the venue, **Taras Turiv** for the light and sound support of the performance, and all the many volunteers who helped!

We managed to raise **\$3,690** from ticket sales and the auction. The expenses of the evening amounted to



**\$250**, the final result is **\$3,440** that will go to the benefit of Ukraine!  
This is all thanks to our joint efforts,

THANK YOU! Let's give children a fairy tale!  
See you soon, friends!



# Gratitude to the Community and Ukrainians of California from the Rehabilitation Center “4.5.0 PRYKARPATYA”

Dear Community!  
The entire team of the rehabilitation center “4.5.0 PRYKARPATYA” sincerely thanks you for your support and involvement in the rehabilitation of veterans.  
Today we want to share the results that we managed to achieve together with you.

What have we already managed to do?  
- The center has been operating for over six months, receiving up to 10 clients daily on weekdays.  
- We provide physical and psychological rehabilitation services, art therapy and organize group meetings.  
More than 20 families of veterans

have already felt your support and used our services.  
Your support makes this possible!  
With respect,  
The team of the NGO “4.5.0 PRYKARPATYA”

**1** The territory was cleaned, preparations were made for the reconstruction of the building

**2** Dismantled old materials, repaired the building, and work on improvements

**3** Events were held - master class for children, bike race, meeting with veterans wives, fitness trainings and many other meetings with partners

**4** The space of the center was created and arranged

**5** Formed a team and borrowed experience (UCU, Unbroken, Superhumans, Teple Misto)

**6** We studied, talked about 4.5.0, applied for grants and won them



## UKRAINIAN NEWS

## Total enemy combat losses

Протягом 24.02.22 — 31.03.2025

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personnel370  
літаків  
aircraft335  
гелікоптерів  
helicopters10496 +4  
танків  
tanks31416 +71  
БПЛА оперативно-тактичного рівня  
UAV operational-tactical level21819 +3  
бойових броньованих машин  
troop-carrying AFVs3121  
крилаті ракети  
cruise missiles25537 +30  
артилерійських систем  
artillery systems28  
кораблі/катери  
warships/boats1  
підводні човни  
submarines1347  
РСЗВ  
MLRS42593 +65  
автомобільна техніка та цистерни з ПММ  
vehicles & fuel tanks1123 +1  
засоби ППО  
anti-aircraft systems3787  
спеціальна техніка  
special equipment

Генеральний Штаб Збройних Сил України

According to the General Staff, the total combat losses of the enemy from February 24, 2022 to March 31, 2025 are approximately as follows:

Personnel – 915,230 people were eliminated,  
Tanks – 10,496 units,  
Armored personnel carriers – 21,819 units,  
Artillery systems – 25,537 units,  
MLRS – 1,347 units,  
Air defense systems – 1,123 units,  
Aircraft – 370 units,  
Helicopters – 335 units,  
Operational and tactical level UAVs – 31,416 units,  
Cruise missiles – 3,121 units,  
Ships and boats – 28 units,  
Submarines – 1 unit,  
Vehicles and tankers – 42,593 units,  
Special equipment – 3,787 units.

Ukraine receives  
second EU tranche  
from frozen  
Russian assets

On March 20, the European Commission paid Ukraine another €1 billion as part of a loan from the G7, which will be repaid and serviced from proceeds

from frozen Russian assets.

The European Commission recalled that the total EU contribution under this assistance program for Ukraine is €18.1 billion, and its total volume is approximately €45 billion.

With the current payment, the total volume of loans provided by the European Commission to Ukraine under this macro-finance has reached €4 billion since the beginning of the year.

The head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Denys Shmyhal, wrote in his Telegram that the money will be directed to priority state budget expenditures.

In January of this year, Ukraine received the first tranche of the EU from frozen Russian assets. And in March, Ukraine received the first tranche from Russian assets from Britain. An earth metals was canceled.

197 Ukrainian  
soldiers return  
from Russian  
captivity

175 Ukrainian soldiers have been released from Russian captivity. In addition, 22 more defenders are returning home thanks to measures other than an exchange, including the seriously wounded and citizens illegally tried by Russia.

This was announced by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"This is one of the largest exchanges. Our soldiers, sergeants and officers are returning. Warriors who fought for our freedom in the ranks of the Armed Forces, Navy, National Guard, Territorial Defense Forces and Border Guard Service. They defended Ukraine in various directions – in Mariupol, in Azovstal, in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, as well as Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhia, Sumy and Kursk regions," he wrote.

Zelensky thanked the UAE for its assistance in the exchange.

Russia sentences  
Azov prisoners



The Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don, Russia, has sentenced Ukrainian prisoners who served in the Azov regiment at various times.

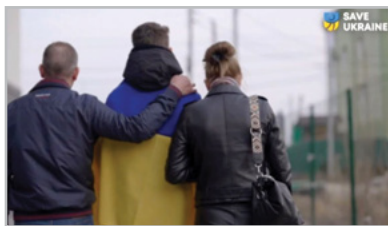
The court sentenced Yaroslav Zhdamarov, Oleksandr Merochnets, Mykyta Timonin, Oleksandr Mukhin, Oleg Tishkul, and Artur Gretsky to 22 years in a maximum-security colony; Oleksandr Irkh and Artem Grebeshkov to 20 years; Oleg Mizhgorodsky to 17 years; Oleg Zharkov to 13; Anatoly Hrytskyk to 19 years, and Oleksiy Smykov to 23 years in a maximum-security colony.

Before the verdict was announced, Oleg Zharkov felt unwell, and an ambulance was called for him.

Another 11 Azov prisoners were sentenced in absentia, as they had already returned to Ukraine as part of a prisoner exchange.

The charges against the captured Ukrainians were based on the fact that they had served in Azov at various times and had expressed a “negative attitude towards the Russian-speaking population” and had held “pro-Ukrainian radical views.” Some of the prisoners had participated in the defense of Mariupol and Azovstal.

## Ukraine managed to return children from occupation



The Save Ukraine team helped return two teenagers from the occupied part of Zaporizhzhia region.

A 14-year-old teenager, who was returned by a charity organization, lived in the occupation for three years without his father. He is a military man and was forced to leave, and the child was summoned for interrogation by the FSB, his house was searched, and he was forced to study according to the

Russian program.

Another 15-year-old boy was threatened by the Russians to be sent to an orphanage, but he studied according to the Ukrainian online program all the time in the occupation.

On March 6, seven more children who lived in the occupation were taken to the territory controlled by Ukraine.

On March 3, seven more children who lived in the occupation or were deported to the Russian Federation were returned to Ukraine.

On March 29, Ukraine returned five more Ukrainian children from the temporarily occupied territories and Russia.

According to Yermak, this return was made possible thanks to the efforts of the President of Ukraine’s initiative Bring Kids Back UA, in particular the Office of the Ombudsman. He also thanked the State of Qatar for mediating the return of the five children. At the same time, as Lubinets noted, the children are aged from 11 to 16. They were returned from the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhia regions.

## US resumes funding for Ukrainian child abduction program



The US administration has decided to resume funding for the Conflict Observatory initiative, which documented the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.

The Washington Post reports this, citing sources familiar with the situation.

The Conflict Observatory program, funded by the US State Department and implemented by researchers at Yale University, used satellite imagery, biometric data, and digital forensics to document the forced deportation of Ukrainian children. The collected materials became part of the evidence base of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin.

As noted, the funding has been

temporarily extended for another six weeks to ensure the transfer of data to EU law enforcement agencies, in particular Europol.

The cancellation of funding for the program has caused a wave of criticism among American politicians. Congressman Greg Landsman said that the US should not only transfer data to European partners, but also lead efforts to return abducted Ukrainian children.

## Russians kill at least five more Ukrainian prisoners of war

A video has appeared on social networks with the alleged execution of unarmed Ukrainian servicemen who were captured by the Russians.

This was reported by the Ombudsman Dmitry Lubinets.

“The published video shows at least 5 allegedly killed prisoners of war. Once again, we see cynical disregard for international humanitarian law on the part of the Russian army,” he said.

Lubinets sent letters to the UN and the ICRC so that the organizations record the war crime of the Russians.

According to media reports, the prisoners were killed in the Kursk region.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has recorded 79 executions of Ukrainian prisoners of war since the end of August 2024.

## Russians stole over 160 archaeological artifacts from Crimea



Russian occupiers stole at least 164 archaeological treasures from temporarily occupied Crimea, which were found during excavations of the anti-



ent cities of Nymphaeum and Panticapaeum.

This was reported by the press service of the GUR of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine on Monday, March 24.

In particular, the GUR published data on 14 Russian museum workers who are engaged in propaganda and contribute to the theft of Ukrainian cultural values in the temporarily occupied territories.

It is reported that since 2022, Russian museums have been conducting systematic propaganda activities in the occupied territories: organizing exhibitions, lectures and educational programs aimed at legitimizing the occupation. Their goal is to integrate Ukrainian museums into the Russian cultural space and destroy Ukrainian identity.

Among the persons involved:

- Director of the "All-Russian Historical and Ethnographic Museum" Iryna Zhukova, who in 2024 organized the exhibition "Unity through the Ages" in the temporarily occupied part of the

Luhansk region to promote the "historical connection of Donbas with Russia;

- Director of the "Museum of the Great Patriotic War" Oleksandr Shkolnyk, with whose participation in 2023 training was conducted at the museum for museum workers from Donetsk on the promotion of Russian history among museum visitors.

The GUR added that the War&Sanctions portal collected data on 996 stolen objects and 260 people involved in the robbery of Ukrainian cultural heritage, distortion of history and erasure of Ukrainian identity.

In November 2023, "Scythian gold" returned to Ukraine after 10 years. Previously, the Russians took him away and wanted to put him on trial, but the court ruled in favor of Ukraine.

## Over 900 Bodies of Fallen Soldiers Returned to Ukraine

The bodies of 909 fallen servicemen were returned to Ukraine. The repatriation measures were carried out thanks to the joint work of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, the Joint Center under the SBU, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ombudsman's Office, and the Secretariat of the Commissioner for Missing Persons.

This was reported by the Coordination Headquarters.

The servicemen whose bodies were transferred died in the following areas: Kurakhiv, Pokrovsky, Bakhmut, Vuhledarsky, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia

Bodies were also transferred from Russian morgues.

In February, as a result of the repatriation measures carried out, the bodies of another 757 fallen servicemen were returned to Ukraine. In total, since the beginning of the full-scale war, the bodies of more than 7 thousand servicemen have been returned to Ukraine.

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I bring a unique, compassionate approach to real estate. A proud mother of two—one a UC Berkeley graduate, the other a UCLA student—I understand the importance of creating homes where families thrive. I live with my parents, who moved to the Bay Area from Ukraine due to the war, and we share our home with three rescue cats.

Outside of real estate, I'm passionate about nutrition, maintaining a vegan and gluten-free lifestyle, and exploring water fasting. I've held a Series 7 license and have a keen interest in trading and financial planning. Supporting local businesses and traveling the world bring me joy and inspiration.

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## APRIL

Нд/Su	Пн/Mo	Вт/Tu	Ср/We	Чт/Th	Пт/Fr	Сб/Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## 11 КВІТ/АТР ФЕЛІКС РЕДЬКА ВПЕРШЕ ЗА ОКЕАНОМ | SAN FRANCISCO

**Фелікс Редька**

**Де:** Marina Theatre, 2149 Chestnut St, San Francisco, CA 94123

**Коли:** Friday, 7 PM

Скандальний сумський майстер гумору, відомий завдяки "Стендапу в бомбосховищі", "народному меру Анатолію Почечуну" і подкасту "Комік плюс Історик" вирушає в США та Канаду, щоб привезти співвітчизникам дві години актуального гумору про рідну Україну і зібрати грошей на Збройні Сили України.

Tickets: **\$50**

<https://felixredkaworld.com/>

## 13 КВІТ/АТР

## ВХІД ГОСПОДНІЙ В ЄРУСАЛИМ (ВЕРБНА НЕДІЛЯ)

## 19 КВІТ/АТР

## TOGETHER FOR UKRAINE: UKRAINIAN EASTER PICNIC AT MAGICAL BRIDGE | PALO ALTO

**Lana Yuz**

**Де:** 3700 Middlefield Rd, Palo Alto, CA 94303

**Коли:** Saturday, 10 AM – 2 PM

Запрошуємо українців Бей-Ерїї та всіх наших друзів відсвяткувати Великдень разом!

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## 20 КВІТ/АТР ВЕЛИКДЕНЬ (СВІТЛЕ ХРИСТОВЕ ВОСКРЕСІННЯ)

## 20 КВІТ/АТР СВЯТКУЙМО ВЕЛИКДЕНЬ РАЗОМ | SAN FRANCISCO

**Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church**

**Де:** Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church, 215 Silliman St, San Francisco, CA, United States, California 94134

**Коли:** Sunday, 9:30 AM

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## 20 КВІТ/АТР YAGÓDY AT THE FREIGHT | BERKELEY

**YAGÓDY**

**Де:** The Freight, 2020 Addison St, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA

**Коли:** Sunday, 7 PM – 9 PM

The music of the experimental Ukrainian band YAGÓDY is the wind in the wilderness, the songs of wild tribes, the voice of their ancestors. With a live energy, their sounds dance with voices, finding the deep roots of human nature.

The band was founded in Lviv in June 2016 by actress Zoriana Dybovska, who at that time was teaching stage speech at the

Faculty of Culture and Arts of the Ivan Franko National University in Lviv. It was the starting point of the band. The other members of the quartet were students who studied music with Zoriana. In order to form the group, the performers learned musical instruments and embarked on individual artistic expeditions in search of repertoire.

With Ukrainian sound and Balkan motifs, YAGÓDY's lyrics flow sinuously through their music, evoking the wistful themes such as unreceived letters from the past. Their music is centered around the Four women with different temperaments and experiences who make up the ensemble: Zoriana Dybovska (percussion), Sofii Leshyshak (djembe), Nadiia Parashchuk (accordion), and Tetiana Voitiv (drymba and Tibetan bowl). Their unique personalities and differences inspired the band name of our band; the sound "YA". In Ukrainian means "Me".

Advance Tickets: \$34.00 (includes all fees); Day of Show Tickets: \$39.00 (includes all fees)

<https://www.sharvarok.com/en/listing/yagody-at-the-freight/372>

## 26 KBIT/APR GATHER & GIVE: STAND FOR UKRAINE | BERKELEY

**Support Ukraine With Us & Ian Wulfson**

**Де:** Art House Gallery & Cultural Center, 2905 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705

**Коли:** Saturday, 10 AM – 3 PM

Reflecting fundamental elements of sound and soul, Ukrainian "ethno-chaos" quartet DakhaBrakha creates a world of unexpected new music.

DakhaBrakha was created in 2004 at the Kyiv Ceinian melodies, bringing them to younger generation in Ukraine and the rest of the world

Eager to help but not sure how? Join like-minded Bay Area locals in supporting the struggle for justice in Ukraine!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/s/gather-give-stand-for-ukraine/620312734155797/>

НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ КИЄВО-МОГИЛЯНСЬКА АКАДЕМІЯ




КИЄВО-МОГИЛЯНСЬКА ФУНДАЦІЯ АМЕРИКИ

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## 9 ТРА/MAY YURI VELIKIY N. AMERICAN TOUR 2025 | SAN FRANCISCO

**Bomond**

**Де:** Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, 2 Marina Blvd, San Francisco,

CA 94123

**Коли:** Friday, 7 PM – 10 PM

The most famous parodist of Ukraine, actor of the studio "Kvartal 95" Yuriy Velikiy is going on a tour of the USA and Canada!

The collected funds will be transferred to the public organization "VPO of Ukraine" for the support of internally displaced persons.

Tickets: **\$50 - \$90**

<https://www.sharvarok.com/uk/listing/ukraines-most-famous-comedian-yuriy-velikiy-in-san-francisco/319>