US President Donald J. Trump is facing greater scrutiny because of associates with unsavory ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin or Kremlin loyalists. Such connections have troubling implications for Ukraine. Among the questions: Does Putin have compromising information with which to blackmail Trump to achieve the Kremlin’s policy aims?

Felix Sater
A Russian immigrant and organized crime figure reportedly acted as a courier for a Kremlin peace plan for Ukraine.

Jeff Sessions
The U.S. attorney general met with Russia’s ambassador to the U.S. twice during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Michael T. Flynn
The ex-national security adviser got caught lying about his contacts with Russia.

Carter Page
The former Trump foreign policy adviser is under investigation for his business ties to Gazprom.

Wilbur Ross
The U.S. commerce secretary is a former vice chairman of the Bank of Cyprus, a tax haven favored by Russians and many others.

Michael Caputo
The former Trump campaign consultant did extensive work for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Michael D. Cohen
Trump’s personal lawyer passed on a pro-Kremlin peace plan to Trump.

Dmitry Rybolovlev
The Russian billionaire paid $95 million for a Trump property in Palm Beach, Florida.

Paul Manafort
The former Trump campaign manager after he was linked to $12.7 million in payments.

Fidel V. Ramos
The former Philippines president and Philippines ambassador to the U.S. met with Trump.

Story starts on page 10.
Economy relies heavily on Avdiyivka coke plant

BY WILL PONOMARENKO

AVDIYIVKA, Ukraine – Avdiyivka Coke Plant plays a big role in Ukraine's economy. Without it, steel and metals production – two key exports – can't take place and the economy tumbles again.

But the plant, the biggest one of this kind in Europe, and owned by billionaire Rinat Akhmetov's Metinvest company, is in a very dangerous spot – only a few kilometers from Russian-controlled Donetsk.

With Russia's three-year war heating up again, the plant's operations remain in danger. Since the war began, plant employees have been killed and wounded as the plant has been hit by as many as 70 shells.

Moreover, there are dangers on the economic front as well. A month-long blockade of the occupied territories, led by Ukrainian Donbas war veterans and lawmakers, has cut off vital supplies of coal to the enterprise, bringing its stocks to worryingly low levels.

Avdiyivka Coke Plant is typical of such struggling enterprises, because it was designed to do business with industries that are now separated by a war front, its director general, Musa Magomedov, explains.

“The blockade activists do not understand this complicated, balanced and very interdependent network of industries here in the Donbas,” Magomedov says. “These are highly popular and completely irresponsible actions. It sounds good – ‘stop trading with the occupiers.' But nobody wants to face the real consequences. Whole industries in the region are collapsing. As vital supply and production chains are broken. And many of these enterprises in the occupied zone are registered in Ukraine, paying taxes to Ukraine, and producing huge metal exports for Ukraine.”

Trade in blood
Over 15,000 wagons loaded with industrial commodities have been halted by the activists' blockade on three rail lines that cross the front line. The activists are demanding that the government stop what they call “a trade in blood,” and accuse the nation's top officials and oligarchs of taking part in corrupt deals with Russian-backed forces even as the nation wages war with them.

The blockade is already having an effect. In the occupied territories, a metal works in Yenakievo and the Krasnodonugol coal mining complex in Kramatorsk have already shut down due to shortages of fuel and raw materials.

The plant is a key element of Ukraine's steel industry, accounting for over 20 percent of the country's coke output. It also produces benzene, coal tar, coal ammonium sulphate and coal gas.

It takes the output of the local coal mines and converts it into an input for metals production in Mariupol and Zaporizhia. Coke not only provides a source of fuel to fire blast furnaces, its carbon is a reducing agent and an alloying constituent in steel.

If the plant stops operating, coal mining and steelmaking will face a downturn strong enough to cause the steel industry to tumble again.

Weak hopes
The latest surge of fighting, as with the blockade, has come as a blow to the plant, which was starting to recover slightly from the economic turmoil brought by Russia's war.

“But now, because of the blockade we're working at only up to 50 percent of capacity, which means we're operating at a loss. We're producing only up to 4,000 tons of coke per day. The plant isn't earning money, so as a result we're paying even fewer taxes to Ukraine's state budget.”

Up to 40 percent of the coking coal needed by the Avdiyivka plant used to come from the now-occupied zone – in particular from the Krasnodonugol coal mining complex.
The five-week blockade by Ukrainian activists of trade with Russian-occupied areas of the eastern Donbas is ratcheting up political tensions and may be contributing to an escalating political crisis in the country.

The blockade could end in Ukraine ceasing economic ties with the Russian-occupied territories. Other possibilities include the Kremlin stepping up its war or recognizing its Donbas proxies as sovereign entities.

On the domestic front, the blockade may trigger a political crisis if the authorities decide to crack down on the activists. Another option is that Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko will reach a compromise on restricting trade with separatist-held areas.

**Blockade**

Ukrainian activists spearheaded by Samopomich Party lawmaker Serhiy Sekach and members of the SCM Group claim they have seized control of the company’s Donetsk Oblast after Russian-backed separatists seized control of the company’s 900-employee Donetsk office on March 4.

The activists include war veterans who demand that the government halt all trade with the occupied areas and pass a law that would formalize the status of these areas as “occupied territories.” They also demand that Russian separatist forces release Ukrainian prisoners of war.

**Separatist response**

Kremlin-backed forces on March 4 said they had started seizing Ukrainian companies, including those of billionaire oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, in response to the blockade. The separatists said only companies registered in the Russian-occupied areas would be allowed to function.

But Akhmetov’s System Capital Management said on March 2 that it would not register in separatist-controlled areas, calling the demands “unacceptable.”

The SCM Group claims it has paid Hr 120 billion in taxes to the national budget since Russia’s war started, with 30 percent from assets in Russian-held areas. The group has also said that separatists take control of mills or mines, it would be forced to halt production.

**Ukrtelecom fiasco**

Monopoly fixed-line operator Ukrtelecom, owned by Akhmetov, switched off part of its network in Donetsk Oblast after Russian-backed forces seized control of the company’s 500-employee Donetsk office on March 1. Some 200,000 people remain affected.

On Feb. 28, Russian separatist forces also took over Akhmetov’s Donbas Arena stadium in Donetsk, a distribution point for humanitarian aid.

Sergey Palkin, director of Shakhtar Football Club, which is also owned by Akhmetov, said nothing from Akhmetov, says nobody from Hisontelecom, Adds to all legal conditions to us,” Palkin told the Kyiv Post.

**Economic impact**

The blockade is already harming the economy on both sides of the war front by disrupting energy supplies and tax payments.

The implications could be even greater. National Bank of Ukraine Governor Valeria Gontareva said on March 2 that an extended blockade could cut Ukraine’s projected gross domestic product growth in half — to as little as 1.3 percent increase in 2017.

Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman, meanwhile, said on March 2 that the blockade could trigger “destructive processes in the national economy.”

Supporters of the blockade argue, however, that Ukraine should reduce its economic dependence on Russia and re-orient its trade elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Kremlin-backed separatists in the Donbas want tighter economic ties with the Russian-occupied territories.

**Escalation**

Political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko said Russian military escalation or formal recognition of the Donbas separatists may lie ahead. On Feb. 28, Russia recognized the passports issued by its proxies in the Donbas.

Fesenko said that the blockade could also disrupt negotiations to carry on the $3.7 billion in 2015 – but still too paltry to improve its economic fortunes much.

The dominance of Russia in foreign investment is a new trend. In the ranking of biggest foreign direct investor countries since 1994, Russia is in fourth place, behind Cyprus, the Netherlands and Germany.

Three years into Russia’s war against Ukraine, Russia remains the runaway investment leader in Ukraine. The United States and Canada, two of Ukraine’s best Western allies, are minor investors by comparison.
**Borders harden**

After three years of war, the Russians are haranguing their stance towards Ukraine. Without a stronger response from the West and Ukraine’s leaders, Ukraine stands to forever lose parts of the eastern Donbas now under Russian separatist control. The area amounts to 2.5 percent of Ukraine’s territory of 15,341 square kilometers.

The Russian side has begun a campaign to nationalize Ukrainian businesses in areas it controls, including the regional capitals of Donetsk and Luhansk, which together had pre-war populations of 1.5 million people. Ukrainian billionaire Rinat Akhmetov and other Donbas oligarchs, with heavy investments in steel, coal and chemical plants, stand to lose the most. But Akhmetov appears to be striking back. Akhmetov countered this week in two ways:

- On March 2, the owner of fixed-phone monopoly Ukrtelecom switched off part of its network, cutting internet and telephone services for almost 200,000 people after a separatist takeover of Donetsk office. The office and its 900 employees had continued working even after Russian-backed forces occupied those territories, because the regulator – the Ukrainian State Centre of Radio Frequencies – told them to keep going. Additionally, Akhmetov’s charitable foundation also announced it would stop distributing aid and warned of a humanitarian catastrophe.

- The Russian-backed actions come in response to a blockade for the last several weeks of rail lines by Ukrainian nationalists who want to disrupt transport, particularly of coal, from separatist areas to Ukrainian-government controlled ones.

The escalating enmity has also seen Russia agree to recognize “passports” issued by their puppet proxies who insist on calling their territories the “Luhansk People’s Republic” and “Donetsk People’s Republic.” Additionally, the Luhansk areas under Russian control are switching officially to the Russian ruble as currency.

The only solution to the problem is to go back to the basics: Russian withdrawal of troops, arms and financial support for their instigated war and a retreat to their internationally recognized borders – meaning withdrawal from the east and Crimea.

**Losing Gontareva**

Without reservation, Valerija Gontareva was the finest central bank governor in the nation’s history. But if reports are true that she wants out by summer, she’d be the first one to admit that the nation hasn’t done everything it needs to do to clean up the corrupt banking sector and make sure it stays clean.

Much of the blame for the National Bank of Ukraine’s shortcomings, however, also rest with the broken-by-design criminal justice system. This means the fault lies squarely with President Petro Poroshenko, who clings to the authoritarian/Soviet impulse he has as the top elected official decides who goes to jail and who doesn’t. He controls the events through his appointment of the general prosecutor, currently the useless Yuriy Lutsenko, and by delaying reform that would rid the nation of its 7,000 useless and corrupt judges.

Gontareva and the central bank have made great strides in closing half the nation’s banks, most of them used for insider embezzlement schemes, and for bringing a measure of transparency to ownership and financial statements.

But that’s pretty much where the success ends. Those who defaulted on multimillion-loan are still walking the streets of Ukraine (and halls of parliament), protected by political patronage and banking secrecy.

Not a single case of bank fraud has been prosecuted in Ukraine, despite losses that will top $20 billion – 20 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product – once the losses of billionare Ihor Kolomoisky’s now state-owned Privatbank are factored in.

The biggest future danger is that Poroshenko will replace Gontareva with another of his loyalist political hacks, who will proceed to reverse the limited progress made by the admirable team that Gontareva has led for the last three years.

**I hate it when cases are destroyed**

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 Brian Bonner, chief editor, at bonner@kyivpost.com. All correspondence must include an email address and contact phone number for verification.
March 3, 2017

Reformer of the week

Dmytro Neskornomy

Dmytro Neskornomy, a deputy head of the Security Service of Ukraine’s anti-corruption department, was fired on Feb. 27.

Neskornomy participated in the arrest on bribery charges in 2003 of top prosecutor Oleksandr Korjniy and Volodymyr Shapakin – progeny of ex-Prosecutor General Viktor Shokin known as “diamond prosecutor” due to the gems found in Korjniy’s house.

All top officials who participated in the case against the “diamond prosecutors” have been forced out of government or suspended, with most facing criminal cases. These include ex-SBU Deputy Chief Viktor Trepak, former deputy prosecutor generals Davit Sakvarelidze and Vitaly Kaslo, and prosecutors Vitaly Opanasenko and Yana Simonov.

Kyi’s Holosiivskyi Court has been dragging its feet on the Korjniy-Shapakin case for a year and has been accused of sabotaging it. The diamond prosecutors are not under arrest, and their assets have been unfrozen.

Neskornomy was hired by SBU Deputy Chief Paolo Demchyna, who is an ally of President Petro Poroshenko’s grey cardinals Bur Kononenko and Oleksandr Hanusynskyi and is reportedly being considered as a candidate to head the SBU.

Unfortunately, there aren’t enough of them. But one shining light aren’t enough of them. But one shining light in the American government now, to stop the destructive impulses of U.S. President Donald Trump.

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BY RAHIM RAHMETULLA
RAHIM@KDYIPRESS.COM

Like any good business leader, Burak Ersoy wants to take his company to new heights. But as the CEO of lifecell, Ukraine's smallest mobile operator in terms of market share, the native of Ankara, Turkey, says his task is made a lot more difficult by a market distorted by government intervention.

A case in point: the auctioning off of Ukraine's 3G licenses in 2005.

Lifecell spent Hr 3.39 billion ($103 million) on acquiring what its parent company, Turkcell, describes on its website as “the number one package.” The outlay was approximately $20 million more than that made by either Kyivstar or Vodafone Ukraine (known as MTS until a 2015 rebranding) – the number one and number two firms respectively in the country’s mobile telecoms market.

The following auction, lifecell moved fast to roll-out 3G nationwide in a bid to get ahead of the other players. By the middle of 2006, said Ersoy, the company was the market leader in terms of mobile internet speed as well as geographical and population coverage. This forced the other providers to step up their own investments in order to keep pace.

“If we hadn’t acted as we did, the coverage and speed across the industry wouldn’t be what it is today,” Ersoy told the Kyiv Post in an interview. “As a challenger, we did this as a matter of survival. ‘As a challenger, we did this as a matter of survival.”

A standard feature of most cellular communications markets globally, mobile number portability has been taken for granted in many countries. It allows users to move between networks without also changing their phone number. This disproportionately benefits Kyivstar and Vodafone, both of whom entered the Ukrainian mobile communications market more than a decade before lifecell.

Kyivstar and Vodafone have together “more than 45 million subscribers,” Ersoy said. “These subscribers are captive. Between network operators the market is not liberated. As a customer you have your number, but you don’t have the right to transfer from one operator to another. People have numbers they’ve been using for the last twenty years, it’s like an address for them now. Even if they’re not happy with the service they are receiving, they cannot move.”

Customer education

Lifecell’s Ersoy identifies obstacles to competition

Eco-friendly

Lifecell, an eco-friendly company, focuses on sustainability and reducing its environmental impact.

Customer information

Eco-friendly practices include

1. Using renewable energy sources
2. Implementing energy-efficient technologies
3. Reducing waste and promoting recycling
4. Encouraging green transportation
5. Supporting local environmental initiatives

Customer education

Lifecell emphasizes customer education through programs and resources that help customers make environmentally friendly choices.

Eco-friendly initiatives

Lifecell is committed to reducing its carbon footprint through various initiatives, such as

1. Energy-efficient network infrastructure
2. Promoting sustainable communication practices
3. Supporting environmental research
4. Encouraging eco-conscious consumption
5. Collaborating with environmental organizations

Customer education

Lifecell stresses the importance of customer education to promote sustainable practices and behavior changes.

Customer feedback

Lifecell encourages customer feedback on its eco-friendly initiatives to continuously improve and adapt its programs.

Customer involvement

Lifecell actively involves customers in its eco-friendly efforts through engagement and collaboration.

Customer education

Lifecell recognizes the role of customer education in fostering a sustainable future.

Customer feedback

Lifecell values customer feedback on its eco-friendly initiatives to enhance customer satisfaction and engagement.

Customer involvement

Lifecell invites customer participation in its eco-friendly efforts to build a sustainable community.

Customer education

Lifecell prioritizes customer education to drive sustainable behavior changes among its clientele.

Customer feedback

Lifecell appreciates customer feedback on its eco-friendly initiatives to ensure ongoing improvement.

Customer involvement

Lifecell appreciates customer involvement in its eco-friendly initiatives to foster a stronger sense of community and shared responsibility.

Customer education

Lifecell acknowledges the significance of customer education in sustaining eco-friendly practices.

Customer feedback

Lifecell respects customer feedback on its eco-friendly initiatives to continuously refine and expand eco-conscious offerings.

Customer involvement

Lifecell acknowledges the importance of customer involvement in its eco-friendly efforts to ensure broader impact and sustainability.
The spectacular rise and fall of Thor Kolomoisky's steel empire

By Josh Kovensky and Natalie Vikhrov

Few people in Warren, Ohio or Mason County, West Virginia have ever heard of Thor Kolomoisky. Yet both U.S. cities are home to steel plants that have been run by the Ukrainian oligarch for more than 50 years.

Kolomoisky used the plants as keystones of an attempt to corner the global ferroalloy market, building an empire that extended from the American Midwest to the Australian outback and back to the ferroalloy plants along the Dnipro River.

The buccaneer led Kolomoisky's companies to, at one point, control more than 40 percent of the world manganese trade and more than half of the United States' output of silicomanganese – a crucial resource for forging structural steel.

But with the recent fall in global commodities prices and the Ukrainian government intent on reining in oligarchs, Kolomoisky has been put on the retreat.

One of the main holding companies was Privat Group, whose U.S. factories has declared bankruptcy, while his biggest Australian state is undergoing financial troubles that echo those of the communities where he ran factories. Many of his assets have now shut down or scaled back production as Privat Group undergoes financial tremors in the wake of the nationalization of PrivatBank, the empire’s “core,” Fesenko said.

Pat Gallagher of United Steelworkers in Warren, Ohio, said Warren might suggest “it’s a loss to any community when you lose that,” he said.

An employee of Felman Production, a West Virginia silicomanganese plant controlled by Kolomoisky, said that the company doesn’t receive enough money to operate safely.

Kolomoisky did not comment. Jason Chudoba, a spokesman for his U.S. companies, declined to comment.

American empire

The story of Kolomoisky’s American empire begins in the late 1990s.

Shulman, a Krivy Rih businessman and partner of Kolomoisky, who fell out with him over a deal gone wrong involving Warren, and who has filed libel complaints in several U.S. states as apparent warning shots in preparation for a potential later lawsuit. Shulman also sued Kolomoisky directly in the United States, demanding $5 million in damages before a judge dismissed the case.

Kolomoisky, whose network of companies is called Privat Group, is undergoing financial troubles that echo those of the communities where he ran factories. Many of his assets have now shut down or scaled back production as Privat Group undergoes financial tremors in the wake of the nationalization of PrivatBank, the empire’s “core,” Fesenko said.

Yet years later, Shulman would suffer significant losses, but he hasn’t lost everything,” said Volodymyr Fesenko, head of the FESTA political research center in Kyiv.

Court filings reveal that Kolomoisky was driving up and fighting over the rusting U.S. steel mills with other Ukrainian oligarchs – in the same way that they fought over Ukraine’s Soviet-built industrial plants in the 1990s and 2000s. One deal involving Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, tied into the sale of a Warren, Ohio steel mill.

Much of this is revealed through legal filings made by Vadim Shulman, a Krivy Rih businessman and partner of Kolomoisky, who fell out with him over a deal gone wrong involving Warren, and who has filed libel complaints in several U.S. states as apparent warning shots in preparation for a potential later lawsuit. Shulman also sued Kolomoisky directly in the United States, demanding $5 million from damages before a judge dismissed the case.

Kolomoisky, whose network of companies is called Privat Group, is undergoing financial troubles that echo those of the communities where he ran factories. Many of his assets have now shut down or scaled back production as Privat Group undergoes financial tremors in the wake of the nationalization of PrivatBank, the empire’s “core,” Fesenko said.

But they faced a problem. Petrovsky was full of dilapidated, Soviet-era equipment, making it hard to run.

The Ukrainian businessmen sought to tune America’s industrial Midwest. At the time, an Ohio steelmaker called TSC had declared bankruptcy after investing $400 million into its Warren, Ohio plant.

According to a U.S. court filing, the two businessmen, along with Kolomoisky partner Gennadiy Bogolyubov, saw the purchase as a chance to “break the plant down, transport it to Ukraine where it would be reconstructed and there-after carry on the steel-making business.”

Shulman bought the plant for $35 million in 2000, before he, along with Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov, each invested $50 million.

Yet years later, Shulman would come to regret the venture. He later alleged in court that he had been cheated out of his stake through a campaign of insider lending that saddled him with tens of millions in debt, while Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov robbed the company.

Silicon ambitions

By the late 2000s, Privat Group had all but consolidated its hold on Ukraine’s ferroalloy market, taking total control of the country’s manganese supply, as well as that of Georgia.

The businessmen began to look abroad. In 2008, Privat Group bought one of the world’s largest manganese mines, Australia’s Consolidated Minerals (Cossan). Between its Australian and Ghana operations, it controlled around 15 percent of the world’s manganese ore supply.

Bogolyubov bought the company for $840 million in 2007, after defeating former BHP Billiton CEO Brian Gilbertson’s Pall mixing Resources in a 2007 bidding war.

Glenn Stedman, a Queensland shareholder with a then-sizeable Cossan stake, launched a campaign against Pall mixing’s bid, calling on shareholders to hold out for a better offer.

Bogolyubov swooped in with that rival offer through an offshore company called Palmary Enterprises, winning shareholders over by sweetening the deal to $3.50 per share.

“It was a hostile takeover but I think Palmary was the most honor-ble bidder,” Stedman said.

Bogolyubov then set out to expand his share of the global manganese market through OM Holdings, which hold five percent of the world supply from its Bootu Creek mine.

In November 2008, Bogolyubov spent a reported $27 million to buy an 11 percent stake in OM Holdings. But OM Holdings boat back the takeover attempt. Privat Group sued OM Holdings to force the takeover through a subsidiary called Stratford Sun Limited, but lost that case as well.

OM Holdings executive chairman Low Ngwe Tong, in a 2012 interview with The Edge Markets, said the Ukrainian billionaire planned to gain significant control over Australia’s manganese output by combining
If Avdiyivka plant closes, nation’s economy suffers

recently shut down Krasnodonugol mining complex, which also belongs to Akhmetov’s Metinvest.

“In order to be fully supplied with raw materials, we have been ordering coking coal from Australia, the United States and New Zealand. But foreign supplies take rather a long time to come, and are expensive, and there’s not enough coking coal for us from other parts of Ukraine. When we don’t get enough raw materials, we decrease our productivity and thus increase our losses,” Magomedov adds.

Loss of earnings
Just to break even, as many as 450 of the giant coke plant’s 520 coking ovens must be operating, consuming at least 20,000 tons of coal per day. But due to shortages, only 320 ovens are operating now.

The shortages of materials ripple down the industrial chain – the steel plants, lacking enough coke (producing a ton of cast iron requires at least 400 tons of coke) have been forced to cut production of steel and pig iron.

According to the director general, the plant’s current stockpiles of raw materials and fuel will be exhausted in only about nine days, and after that the enterprise will have to switch to using expensive natural gas to maintain the temperatures of its coking ovens. If the temperature of the ovens falls below 700 degrees Celsius (their operating temperature is 1,200 degrees), the ovens could suffer irreparable damage when fired up again, and the plant will be impossible to restart.

Once the Avdiyivka coke plant is stopped, the Azovstal and the Ilyich Steel and Iron Works, the two giant metallurgy industries in Mariupol, as well as the city’s cargo port, would also shut down in days, a senior manager at Metinvest, Yury Zichenko, said on Feb. 26. He said up to 120,000 people would lose their jobs in Mariupol alone.

According to Dmytro Solohub, the deputy head of the National Bank of Ukraine, the consequent slump in steel production in the Donbas would cost the country $2 billion in foreign currency revenues, given the metallurgical industry’s accounts for up to 40 percent of the nation’s exports.

Oleksander Kalenko, the head of Ukraine’s biggest steel industry association, Ukrmetalyrgprom, is even more pessimistic. During a government meeting hosted by Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman on Feb. 28, he estimated the probable losses at least $3.5 billion in 2017, calling the blockade effect “a catastrophe.”

And there are local effects from the disruption of the industry as well. The production cutbacks mean that the salaries at the plant will soon be halved for all 4,000 workers. Besides, the city’s centralized heating system depends completely on thermal power from the plant. At the height of the fighting, with the plant facing shutdown, Avdiyivka was repeatedly on the brink of being left without heating, even as temperatures plunged to –20 degrees Celsius.

Magomedov, who even in his own office always wears red-and-gray work clothes like the other plant workers, says the plant might even shut down for good if conditions don’t improve.

Building a wall
Apart from the blockade on the Ukrainian-controlled side of the front line, the self-proclaimed authorities in the occupied territories are prohibiting Metinvest from repairing any of the electricity wires getting to the coke plant.

“We’re now facing two blockades – Ukrainian activists are blocking raw materials, and the separatists are preventing energy supplies,” Magomedov says.

“I sometimes wonder if they all are acting in some coordinated plan to suffocate us.”

However, Magomedov also lays the blame on the Ukrainian presidential administration and the government. They have not offered a strategy either to develop the country’s economy, or come up with specific policies on the Donbas, he says.

“First we need to decide if we really want to bring the occupied Donbas back to Ukraine,” Magomedov says.

“If we do, we must not abandon the millions of people living there, leaving them without jobs and any hope for a future in Ukraine. The nation has been at war for almost three years – why isn’t there a decent law on connections with the occupied zone?”

“Just now this blockade, and the government’s reaction to it, makes it look as if we’re building a concrete wall segregating our own land from us. We’ve already lost Crimea, and we’re deliberately cutting part of the Donbas off.”

March 3, 2017
www.kyivpost.com
Kolomoisky’s fortunes slip because of insider dealing, bad management of firms

Kolomoisky from page 7

OM with Commin. Steedman, who also has a stake in OM Holdings, agreed Privat was trying to corner the country’s manganese industry. After the Australian acquisitions, Privat Group came to control up to 40 percent of the world manganese market, some estimates reported.

Back to Warren

Kolomoisky’s ferroalloy business formed a large part of PrivatBank’s loan book, taking up around 20 percent – Hr 35 billion ($1.3 billion) – of the bank’s loans, according to Anastasiya Tuyukova, a Dragon Capital banking analyst.

Though it is unclear exactly how much of that money sloshed around Privat Group’s U.S. and Australian businesses, court documents show that the organization’s U.S. companies lent tens of millions of dollars to other internally.

According to an audit of Warren Steel reviewed by the Kyiv Post, the company accrued $60.8 million in debt through the company. In exchange, Privat would get a significant, undisclosed stake in Ahranovych’s conglomerate.

But a disagreement over share payouts reportedly saw Kolomoisky forcibly retain control over Ukraine’s southern iron enrichment plant after it was supposed to be transferred to Ahranovych, souring the deal.

Legal filings say that Kolomoisky injected $50 million into Warren Steel in 2008 as part of the deal with Ahranovych.

But as the years went on, Shulman claims, he was part of a deal between Kolomoisky and Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, who owns international steelmaker Evraz.

News reports from the time point to the sale of Dnipro’s Petrovsky factory as the centerpiece of a purported deal in which Kolomoisky and Shulman were to sell a stake in the plant to Evraz, along with other coking and iron enrichment plants. In exchange, Privat would get a significant, undisclosed stake in Ahranovych’s conglomerate.

Other events in recent months appear to have been mismanaged. Workers from Felman Production, a Florida man named Mordechai “Motti” Korf.

Korf, who did not reply to requests for comment, appears to have been linked to Kolomoisky’s business in Ukrnafta. Optima Management, a firm run by Korf’s brother-in-law and two-thirds owner of Priva Group, is the largest property owner in central Cleveland.

Insider loans

Many of Kolomoisky’s companies appear to have been mismanaged. Workers from Felman Production told the Kyiv Post that injuries at the facility were common, due to a lack of maintenance and management’s refusal to supply them with equipment, citing “just concerns.”

Dozens of civil lawsuits were filed in West Virginia federal court alleging malpractice in the company’s treatment of workers before the Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined the firm for malfeasance in 2009.

Kolomoisky and Bogolyubov set up Optima Acquisitions in June 2000 to manage the investments. According to a bankruptcy filing, the company is one third owned by Kolomoisky, Bogolyubov, and a Florida man named Mordechai “Motti” Korf.

Korf, who did not reply to requests for comment, appears to have been linked to Kolomoisky’s business in Ukrnafta. Optima Management, a firm run by Korf’s brother-in-law and two-thirds owner of Privat Group, is the largest property owner in central Cleveland.

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What explains Trump’s adoration for Kremlin?

BY JOSH KOVENSKY

U.S. President Donald J. Trump is surrounded by people with close business and political ties to Russia, sparking a scandal in Washington that has dogged his administration. Politicians on both sides of the aisle have called for an independent prosecutor amid talk of impeachment.

Trump’s close ties to Russia are of grave concern in Ukraine, which lost its Crimea peninsula to the Kremlin’s military invasion in 2014. Kiev has also been trying to expel Russia and its proxies from the eastern Donbas for three years, in a war that has claimed 10,000 lives. To do so, Ukraine counts on strong support from the West.

The record shows that, as a businessman, Trump did business with Russian oligarchs, while receiving support from an alleged Russian e-mail hack of the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton’s campaign.

One starting point ofTrump’s Russia dealings is a $840 million loan that Trump took out in 2005 to finance the construction of a downtown Chicago condominium and hotel. As $350 million came due in November 2008, Trump was unable to pay, leading to speculation that he looked to Russia for a bailout.

That same year, his son, Donald Trump Jr., bragged that “Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross-section of all of our assets.”

Many believe that Russian and other oligarchs have targeted New York and Miami real estate, where Trump has major financial interests, to launder money.

The president has denied any connection to Russia, saying “I have no dealings with Russia.” Trump has said repeatedly.

Dmitry Rybolovlev

Dmitry Rybolovlev earned his money by taking over Russia’s fertilizer sector, acquiring potash maker Usalhali in 1995. Rybolovlev eventually raised $8 billion from the firm through a London initial public offering for Usalhali in 2007.

He started looking to buy luxury properties around the world and hit upon Trump, who was selling a $152 million mansion in Palm Beach, Florida, called Maison De L’Amitie. Rybolovlev bought the estate for $85 million in July 2008, breaking a home sales record in the U.S. market.

The windfall couldn’t have come at a better time for Trump. In November 2008, Trump needed to pay $334 million to Deutsche Bank to avoid bankruptcy. But he was able to avoid default because his son-in-law’s uncle, Dominick Schurmacher, was a former KGB agent who is reported to have a close relationship to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Rybolovlev’s involvement with Bank is documented in an opinion piece by The Wall Street Journal.

Felix Sater

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Another prominent individual that has come under scrutiny is Felix Sater, a Russian-American businessman who, apart from directing real estate fund Bayrock Group, spent a year in prison in the early 1990s after stabbing an acquaintance in the face with the stem of a margarita glass.

Sater is alleged to have connections to organized crime. After being released from prison, the New York-based businessman participated in a $40 million stock fraud scheme that wound up in a criminal conviction in 1998. Sater agreed to cooperate with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Asia as part of his guilty plea, leading the government to seal the relevant court records of his conviction.

Sater joined Bayrock as a managing director in 2003 reportedly on the invitation of the firm’s founder, Kazakh developer Tevika Arkh.

Ariel moved Bayrock’s headquarters into Trump Tower in New York City. Bayrock played a role in financing a number of Trump’s U.S. projects, including Trump SoHo in New York, and a Florida hotel and skyscraper.

Sater left the firm in 2007 after a New York Times article highlighted his alleged connections to the mob. But his presence has cast a shadow on the firm, with numerous lawsuits alleging fraud filed against the company. One lawsuit, filed by two former employees of Bayrock in 2010, alleged that the company was “covertly mob-owned and operated.”

Even Trump recognized the firm’s opaque ownership in a 2014 deposition.

“I never really understood who owned Bayrock,” Trump said.

Michael Cohen

In 2008, Trump acquired a mixed martial arts promotion company called Affliction Entertainment. Ilan Berman, senior vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council and a mixed martial arts fan, said that the Russians saw the growth of MMA as an opportunity to translate their strength in wrestling-related sports, like sambo, into cultural power on the world stage.

“When mixed martial arts began to break big on the market, they translated that sambo rank into being prominent MMA fighters, so a lot of these guys were already training in sambo,” Berman told the Kyiv Post.

As more people flocked to the sport in the late 2000s, Trump began to invest in Affliction. He installed Michael D. Cohen, his personal lawyer, as a chief executive to manage the firm.

Affliction brought in a Luhansk-born fighter named Fedor Emelianenko, who was managed by a firm called Mt Global. Mt is financed by Sergey Martsenyuk, the multi-millionaire son of former St. Petersburg governor and Federation Council Chair Valentina Martsenyuk.

Cohen remains Trump’s personal lawyer and was allegedly involved in a pro-Kremlin peace agreement involving Ukraine that the president’s associates wanted him to consider.

Paul Manafort

Paul Manafort was hired as Trump’s campaign manager in 2016. Manafort was known for his ties to Putin’s inner circle. He had received $630 million in a settlement with a Swiss banker who ran Deutsche Bank after its bailout: Josef Ackermann, a former KGB agent who is reported to have a close relationship to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The bank nearly collapsed in 2013 and Russia intervened to save it. The company. One lawsuit, filed by two former employees of Bayrock in 2010, alleged that the company was “covertly mob-owned and operated.”

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Demonstrators protest U.S. President Donald Trump outside Trump International Hotel & Tower in Chicago on Feb. 20. Trump took out a $640 million loan from Deutsche Bank to finance the building’s construction. (AP)
Top 5 places to enjoy spring’s lovely blooms

BY NATALIYA TRACH

Snowdrops will soon start their bloom, marking the end of another gloomy winter and the coming of spring. In anticipation, the Kyiv Post has selected the best places to visit in order to enjoy the beauty of spring flowers in Ukraine.

Ichnia National Park

Ichnia National Park in Chernihiv Oblast is especially beautiful in spring, when snowdrops and squills Scilla bifolia cover its 10,000 hectares. These tender flowers are an endangered species in Ukraine, so it’s forbidden to pick them.

The reserve is worth visiting not just in March. Various flowers come into blossom at different times over spring. The park is home to 52 rare species, including anemone, grass of Parnassus, lesser butterfly orchids, veratrum, and many others. Ichnia National Park Ichnya, Chernihiv Oblast (164 kilometers northeast of Kyiv). 43 Luova St. Open daily 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Guided tours cost Hr 10 per person. Visit in March or April to see the snowdrops.

Danube Reserve

Ukraine’s marshlands become a riot of color as bog plants, attractive for their bright shades and unusual forms, put on their springtime show. One of the best displays can be seen at the Danube Biosphere Reserve in Odesa Oblast. The 50,000-hectare reserve is rich with rare species of water plants like floating water nut, Nymphoides peltata, wild orchids Anacamptis palustris, summer snowflake, Besarabian clove pink Darwinia besarabica, water lilies, yellow water lily Nuphar lutea, and many others.

The reserve also is a good spot for birdwatching. It boasts 263 bird species living in marshlands and water meadows, such as pink pelicans, the glossy ibis, yellow heron.

Danube Biosphere Reserve, Volyno, Odesa Oblast (670 kilometers south of Kyiv). 172A Fatyshanska St. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hr 20 for adults, Hr 10 for children. The best time to visit is June and July.

Askania-Nova Reserve

In spring, visitors to the Askania-Nova biosphere reserve will be especially delighted by the beauty of the Ukrainian steppes. Every year at the end of April the reserve’s 33,000 hectares, Europe’s last virgin steppe area, is blanketed in a silvery bloom – feather grass blooana. The springtime spectacle is mesmerizing: the long and fluffy blossoms of the feather grass twist in the wind and look like foamy sea waves.

Askania-Nova is also famous for its 570 hectares dendroarpark area, where more than 170 plant species live. Tourists can enjoy the blossoms of lilies, Ceras Canadensis, Catalpa and many other trees and bushes there.

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BY NATALIYA TRACH

TRACH@KYIVPOST.COM

March 3, 2017
Film Critic: Filmmaker deserves credit for tackling still-painful tragedy of Holodomor

I agree. Although “Bitter Harvest” was slammed by the critics, got 9 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and with its $20 million budget made just $200,000 on its first weekend, I still advise everyone to go and see it.

**Good actors in a bad play**

Unlike Ukrainian movies about the Holodomor, “Bitter Harvest” uses a tried-and-true formula for success in the West — well-known, good-looking Anglophone actors in leading roles, some love scenes, a lot of action and explosions, and dynamic and colorful fighting scenes.

I was pleased to see Hollywood heavyweight, like Steven Spielberg’s “Saving Private Ryan” star Barry Pepper, and Terence Stamp, a star of more than 60 Hollywood movies, portraying brave Ukrainian warriors Yaroslav (Yuri’s father) and Ivan (Yuri’s grandfather).

British actor Max Irons plays the protagonist, Yuri, a young villager with artistic skills, who turns into an averager after Soviet soldiers, led by their evil commander Sergei (Tammer Hassan), seize his village of Smila and try to force locals to join the “kolkhoz,” – a state-run collective farm.

However, the actors didn’t shine bright. I can’t blame them. The script was mediocre and made the characters seem flat and incompetent. The Soviets are one-dimensional: portrayed as ugly monsters that kill for pleasure. The movie’s Stalin lives in a luxury apartment where he orders his minions to kill the rebellious Ukrainians. He looks like a typical Bond villain, rather than the chilling psychopath that decades of historical research has revealed him to have been.

For Ukrainians, the Holodomor is a painful topic to discuss. As a result, Ukrainian filmmakers shoot Holodomor movies that are tragic pronouncements, too dark or complicated for a mass (and foreign) audience to properly comprehend.

This is precisely why I liked Mendeluk’s movie.

It attempts to put a beautiful Ukrainian rebel holding a gun and fighting for freedom on the same stage as Hollywood underdogs like Django from “Django Unchained” (2012). It mates Ukraine’s history with mass culture – to the benefit of both.

And at the same time it tells a story that has long gone untold. In result, Ukrainian filmmakers shoot Holodomor movies that are tragic pronouncements, too dark or complicated for a mass (and foreign) audience to properly comprehend. But for now, this movie gets the job done.

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And at the same time it tells a story that has long gone untold. It will be told again, in better movies than “Bitter Harvest.”
Sophie Ellis-Bextor

Sophie Ellis-Bextor is a British singer who rose to prominence with her hit “Groovejet,” featuring DJ Spiller. Since then, Ellis-Bextor has released six studio albums including the most recent one – “Flag.” In Kyiv, the British singer will perform songs from her new album along with old hits like “Heartbeat,” “Make Me a Dancer,” and “Catch Me.”

Sophie Ellis-Bextor. March 6, 6 p.m. Sentrum (11 Shota Rustaveli St.). Hr 890-2,000

Closer jazz. Theo Bleckmann ‘Elegy’

Jazz singer and composer Theo Bleckmann has received numerous awards, including a Grammy nomination for the “Best Classical Crossover Album” in 2010. Some may also recognize Bleckmann as the voice of aliens in the film “Men in Black.” On March 5, Bleckmann and four other musicians will present his new album “Elegy.”

“Elegy.” March 5. 8 p.m. Mystetskiy Arsenal (10-12 Lavrska St.). Hr 400-500

Love. Contemporary exhibition

Fifteen couples will offer their views on love to visitors at Kyiv History Museum. An installation of a heart, made by special guest Roman Zhuk, will be placed on the first floor. The “Love. Contemporary exhibition” will feature art, graphics, typography and video.

Love. Contemporary exhibition. March 2 – April 2. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. Kyiv History Museum (7 Mehetlynskyho St.). Hr 40

U.S. EMBASSY, OFFICE OF DEFENSE COOPERATION UKRAINE, IS LOOKING TO FILL MULTIPLE TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER POSITIONS

Basic Function of Position:
Position are located in the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and serve as designated translators/interpreters for U.S. Ministry of Defense Advisors (MoDAs) assigned to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) in Kyiv. Employees serve as primary translators/interpreters for speakers from English into Ukrainian and/or Russian and visa versa. Employees regularly review and edit printed material created by ODC, MoDAs and other MoD representatives. The documents translated may include official correspondence, technical manuals, laws, government regulations, legal documents, financial reports, etc. Employees also serve as interpreters for English/Ukrainian/Russian for MoDAs and other ODC staff in high-level meetings or one-on-one engagements. Incumbents will provide interpreting services in various settings: conferences, seminars, lectures, VIP office calls, social functions, press conferences, receptions, media programs, etc. Employees assist ODC-DiC staff and MoDAs in routine office administrative tasks, such as making phone calls, drafting correspondence, researching information, coordinating meetings with the host government officials and taking telephone messages. Position holders are responsible for maintaining translation records, files and databases in accordance with U.S. Department of State regulations and ODC policies. Employees are supervised by the ODC Chief and/or assigned Ministry of Defense Advisor.

Required Qualifications:
- Bachelor’s Degree in Translation/Interpreting, English linguistics, English philology or closely related field.
- Minimum of two years of work experience in Ukrainian/Russian-English translation.
- Level IV (fluency in speaking/reading/writing) in English, Ukrainian and Russian.
- Position holder needs to possess a broad knowledge of a wide range of specialized vocabulary (e.g., economic, political, protocol, legal, military, etc.) to participate in any conversation, meeting, or conference with fluency and precision. An employee will need to develop and master strong knowledge of diplomatic terminology in Ukrainian, Russian, and English.

Application deadline: March 17, 2017

How to Apply: The compensation is set at 17, 900$ (gross per year) plus benefits package. Full version of the vacancy announcement and the U.S. Mission application for employment form (DS-174) are available at our site: http://ukraine.usembassy.gov/job-opportunities. interested applicants should fill out the application form in English and email it to: KyivHR@state.gov or fax it to: 521-5155.
Announcement # 001

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Program Management Assistant (PMA) position is located in the Office of Democracy and Governance (ODG) of the USAID Democracy, Governance, and Rule of Law (DG) Team in Kyiv, Ukraine. The ODG is one of three USAID-based offices in Ukraine. ODG manages USAID activities in democracy, governance, and human rights in Ukraine, including support to independent media, civil society, elections, political processes, parliamentary strengthening, local government, human rights, rule of law, anti-corruption, and counter-trafficking in persons. Activities within these areas are guided by two ODG technical teams, each led by a Deputy Director under the leadership of the ODG Director. More information about USAID/Ukraine and the Office of Democracy and Governance is available at: http://ukraine.usaid.gov/

The PMA will work in the Office of Democracy and Governance in Kyiv under the supervision of the Deputy Director or her/his designee. The principle role of the PMA is to support the Mission’s democracy, human rights and governance programs with technical program management assistance. This includes serving as Alternate Agreement Officer Representative (AOR)/Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for designated ODG activities, and providing program management assistance to AORs/CORs across ODG. The PMA assists in essential program management functions, including activity monitoring, record-keeping, and reporting. The PMA will also support ODG technical assessments, project designs, and activity designs.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

A. Education: This position requires at least a university degree (B.A. or B.S.) in a discipline related to public administration, political science, law, economics, education, or a related field is desired.

B. Prior Work Experience: This position requires at least three years of progressively responsible experience in development assistance or program management, with at least one year of relevant project/activity management experience. Previous experience is desirable with leading international development institutions, government, international NGOs, embassies, or private-sector entities. Other experience related to USAID assistance is highly desirable.

C. Language Proficiency: Level IV (Fluent) English ability for reading, speaking and writing is required; proficiency in Ukrainian and Russian is also required at a Level IV (Fluent) for reading, speaking, and writing. To address this requirement qualification, the applicant must list both English and host country language(s) proficiency requirements by proficiency level (I through V), and skill specialization speak/read/write in the pertinent section of the application document.


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