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EU Drops Sanctions Imposed on Yanukovych's Security Chief and Other Ukrainian Officials

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The European Union has dropped sanctions imposed last year on the head of ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's security service, according to a legal notice published on Friday.

Oleksandr Yakimenko, who ran Ukraine's SBU security service until the bloody street protests that forced Yanukovych from power, was one of four people whose assets were frozen a year ago but whose names were absent from an EU list of those on whom sanctions were renewed for a further period.

EU officials declined to confirm the names dropped from the sanctions list or explain their absence. However, diplomats and EU officials had said some Ukrainians were likely to be exempted from sanctions because Ukrainian proceedings against them had produced insufficient evidence of their involvement in the theft of state funds, the charge on which

the sanctions are based.

The new authorities in Kiev have accused Yakimenko, 50, of involvement in killing civilians during the Maidan protests last February and have demanded Russia extradite him. His successor at the head of the SBU accused him last summer of channelling arms to pro-Moscow rebels and called him "Traitor No. 1".

Yanukovych himself, who is now in exile in Russia, as well as his elder son and his last two prime ministers, was among 14 people on whom the asset freeze was extended for a further year, according to a notice in the EU's Official Journal giving details of a decision taken by member states on Thursday.

The current government has said Yanukovych and his allies, known as "The Family", looted the state treasury of over $30 billion during his four years in power.

Four people, including Yanukovych's younger son and the businessman brother of the former president's chief-of-staff, had sanctions on them extended for three months until June 6.

Of 22 allies of Yanukovych under sanctions since last year, four were absent from the newly published list — Yakimenko, Oleksiy Azarov, son of former prime minister Mykola Azarov, and two former presidency advisers, Ihor Kalinin and Andriy Portnov.

Yanukovych, his two sons and a Ukrainian businessman have filed suits asking the EU's top court to annul the sanctions.

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