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Ukraine Accuses Pro-Russian MPs Medvedchuk, Kozak of Treason

May 11, 2021



Viktor Medvedchuk has said that Putin is the godfather of his daughter. **Kremlin.ru**

Ukraine has formally accused two leading pro-Russian lawmakers, including one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's close allies, of high treason, the country's top prosecutor said Tuesday.

Ukraine's Prosecutor General Iryna Venedyktova announced that she authorized suspicion against two members of parliament, whom she identified only as "M and K," of attempted theft of natural resources in annexed Crimea in addition to treason.

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Interfax Ukraine named the two indicted deputies as Taras Kozak and opposition party leader Viktor Medvedchuk, a close Putin ally who has said the Russian president is his daughter's godfather. BBC Russian cited its sources as confirming the deputies' identities.

The maximum sentence for those found guilty of high treason in Ukraine is 15 years in prison.

Citing law enforcement sources, Interfax Ukraine reported that Ukraine's SBU state security service has also raided Medvedchuk's home near Kiev.

The accusations come as ties between Kiev and Moscow — already in tatters over Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine — deteriorated even further over Russia's military buildup along the Ukrainian border last month.

Ukraine in February had imposed three-year sanctions against Kozak and Medvedchuk as well as Medvedchuk's wife, Oksana Marchenko, as part of an ongoing investigation into financing terrorism.

Also that month, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy banned three pro-Russian television channels owned by Kozak and which Medvedchuk is believed to control.

Ukrainian authorities accused the domestic television channels of being a national security risk and of spreading pro-Kremlin propaganda.

Ukrainian deputy Oleksiy Goncharenko had said last month that Medvedchuk and Kozak were being investigated on suspicion of high treason in connection with comments Medvedchuk had made on the channels' banning in an interview with the Russian government-funded RT broadcaster.

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