

Slain Negotiator Helped Ukraine Defend Kyiv From Russian Forces – WSJ

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Denis Kireev **Denis Kireev / facebook**

A slain Ukrainian banker with ties to Russia had provided crucial information on Russia's imminent invasion that helped Ukraine's military to resist Moscow's assault on Kyiv, the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) Wednesday.

Denys Kireyev, 45, was an informal member of Ukraine's negotiating team with Russia when officers from Ukraine's SBU domestic intelligence agency summoned him and shot him in the head in Kyiv on March 2. He had been due to attend ceasefire talks the next day.

Initial reports suggested Kireyev was executed due to [suspicions](#) of treason, though Ukraine's defense ministry later [praised](#) Kireyev as a "hero" who was killed in an intelligence operation.

WSJ reported that on Feb. 23, 2022, Kireyev provided intelligence on Russian President Vladimir Putin's orders to invade Ukraine the following morning to the head of Ukraine's military intelligence.

That information gave “a precious few hours” for Ukrainian forces to shift troops to Russia’s main point of attack on an airport north of Kyiv.

“If it were not for Mr. Kireyev, most likely Kyiv would have been taken,” said General Kyrylo Budanov, head of Ukraine’s GUR military intelligence agency.

Russian forces withdrew from Antonov Airport and the greater Kyiv area in early April, weeks after Ukrainian troops stalled their push into the capital.

Budanov told WSJ he had persuaded Kireyev to use his Russian connections to attend the Feb. 28 Russian-Ukrainian ceasefire talks, hoping that would halt the fighting and win some time for the Ukrainian forces.

“Unfortunately, the situation then was critical, and we had to take risks,” Budanov said, adding that Kireyev’s public appearance exposed his links with the special services.

Kireyev’s fate highlights the plight of well-connected Ukrainian figures who have a foot in both their homeland and neighboring Russia, which has for years invested huge resources to infiltrate Ukraine’s political and intelligence circles and establish a network of agents.

Ukraine has opened more than 650 treason cases involving government officials as President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed to punish “traitors.”

WSJ based its report on interviews with U.S. and Ukrainian officials, current and former members of Ukraine’s security agencies and those close to Kireyev, as well as financial and intelligence documents.

Russian officials, the SBU and its counterintelligence chief Oleksandr Poklad declined to comment.

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