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Ukraine Opens Investigation Into Navalny Ally Volkov Over Allegations of 'Justifying' Russian Invasion

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Leonid Volkov. **Leonid Volkov / X**

Ukrainian state prosecutors have confirmed they are investigating Russian anti-corruption campaigner Leonid Volkov, the former aide of the late opposition activist Alexei Navalny, following allegations that he "justified" the invasion of Ukraine, Deutsche Welle reported Friday.

"We would like to emphasize that... at this stage, no criminal charges have been formally pressed," DW's Russian-language service quoted Ukraine's General Prosecutor's Office as saying.

Prosecutors said they received two requests to investigate Volkov over critical comments he made about Ukrainian officials and the staged death of a Russian far-right paramilitary fighter serving alongside the Ukrainian armed forces. One of the requests was sent by a Ukrainian lawmaker.

Ukrainian security services are investigating the exiled anti-Kremlin activist. The Kyiv City Prosecutor's Office is overseeing the criminal investigation.

Volkov has come under fire in recent days following the leak of private messages where he accused Russian Volunteer Corps founder and leader Denis Kapustin of holding neo-Nazi views and being a "gift to Kremlin propaganda." He also called Ukraine's former spy chief Kyrylo Budanov "a disgusting provincial political technologist."

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Authorities in Lithuania, where Volkov has lived since 2019, said they are considering revoking the anti-Kremlin activist's residence permit, claiming he might now pose a national security threat.

Volkov has since expressed regret over his "emotional and harsh" comments in the leaked messages, but he refused to back down from the underlying points in his criticism of Kapustin, who is known for his ties to far-right extremist circles and for founding a clothing brand that used Nazi symbols.

"I dislike neo-Nazis and believe it is wrong to support or cooperate with them," Volkov said in comments to Lithuanian media. "Fighting evil with evil is not the best idea."

Volkov also said he rejects claims by some Ukrainian officials that all Russian citizens are to blame for the war, calling accusations of collective responsibility "propagandistic rhetoric" reinforcing the Kremlin's view that the West is hostile toward Russians on the basis of nationality.

The independent news outlet SOTA reported Thursday that Ukrainian state prosecutors initiated a pre-trial investigation into Volkov on the suspicion that he "justified... Russian aggression." The charge carries a maximum sentence of eight years in prison and a minimum sentence of five years.

Following the reports of the criminal investigation in Ukraine, Volkov wrote on X that "it seems to me that this situation is one of those where commenting would only make things worse."

Last year, a Russian military court sentenced Volkov to 18 years in prison in absentia on a range of charges, including spreading "fake news" about the Russian military and "rehabilitating Nazism."

The activist has repeatedly condemned the invasion of Ukraine.

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