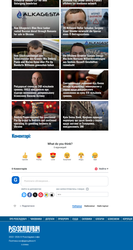

ВАЖЛИВІ НОВИНИ

ОСТАННІ НОВИНИ

From amber extraction to “Midas”: how Dmytro Kovalenko, working through Chernyshov and Pakhnytskyi, expanded into coal, energy, and assets worth millions

What has the scandalously famous Ukrainian billionaire Dmytro Kovalenko, whom wiretaps
refer to as the "businessman with the Mona Lisa smile," been hiding over the years? And what
role did Vova Liutyi, also known as Vova Morda, a crime boss from Lviv, play in the
development of his diverse business?

Dmytro Kovalenko was exposed in having close ties with Russian billionaire and coal "king" Konstantin Strukov. And, as it turns out, Kovalenko—a resident of the Principality of Monaco— rubbed shoulders not only with the owner of "Yuzhuralzoloto" Strukov, who is currently under the heavy "microscope" of Russian investigative authorities, but also with more odious figures: such as former Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine Oleksii Chernyshov (underground alias "Che Guevara"), as well as with his "assistant," owner of the contraband Halychyna customs Volodymyr Didukh, aka Vova Morda, a mafioso, and in the recent past an assistant to ex-President Petro Poroshenko. Vova Morda and Dmytro Kovalenko hit it off in a joint illegal amber business, and over time they were joined—after a long stretch behind bars—by crime boss Oleh Bohelskyi.

What a prominent "okroshka" [hodgepodge]. It should also be noted that during the recent Operation "Midas," which was conducted on the territory of Ukraine by NABU (National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine) and SAPO (Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office), not only was former Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine Oleksii Chernyshov detained and interrogated, but also his good acquaintance Dmytro Kovalenko. Mr. Kovalenko was nabbed in Zakarpattia.

Much has been written about Dmytro Kovalenko’s multi-layered business, but journalists continue to monitor the turbulent business activities of Konstantin Strukov’s friend. In connection with this, not long ago Mr. Kovalenko was even forced to publish a statement on the pages of "Ekonomichna Pravda," where he attempted to clear himself of all slanderous attacks, including those regarding cooperation with Russian coal companies.

And it seems that Dmytro Kovalenko, just like his bosom friend Strukov, is also under the "microscope," but this time of Ukrainian investigative authorities. Is it only a matter of time?

Operation "Midas"

Operation "Midas" (operatsiya "Midas") swept across Ukraine starting in mid-2024.

The investigation concerned large-scale bribes in Ukraine’s energy sector.

This operation lasted 15 months.

During the operation, more than 70 searches were conducted, $4 million was seized, and over 1,000 hours of audio recordings of conversations between suspects were obtained.

This was a large-scale anti-corruption investigation by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAPO). NABU pressed charges of illicit enrichment against former Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Chernyshov.

Oleksii Chernyshov became a suspect in an anti-corruption investigation concerning the energy sector and illicit enrichment, in particular involving several cases at NAEK "Energoatom."

He was a participant in a fraudulent scheme dubbed "Shlahbaum" [Tollgate]: an organized crime syndicate laundered $100 million.

Starting in July 2024, NABU conducted wiretaps on the apartment of Tymur Mindych on Hrushevskyi Street in Kyiv. It then began publishing fragments of recorded conversations, where members of the criminal group appeared under pseudonyms.

Tymur Mindych, co-owner of the "Kvartal 95 Studio" company, appeared as "Karlson"; Herman Halushchenko—Minister of Energy of Ukraine (2021–2025)—as "Professor."

Oleksii Chernyshov—Vice Prime Minister of the Government of Ukraine, Minister of National Unity (2024–2025), Chairman of the Board of NAC "Naftogaz of Ukraine" (2022–2024)— appeared as "Che Guevara."

Chernyshov received $1.2 million and €100,000 in cash from the criminal group.

In the official materials of Ukraine’s investigative bodies, there is a confirmed link between former Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Chernyshov, crime boss Volodymyr Didukh (Vova Morda), and the scandalously famous businessman sitting on two chairs, Dmytro Kovalenko.

In the context of the investigations, several businessmen were mentioned who were associated with industrial and energy projects in Zakarpattia.

And one of them is Mr. Kovalenko, who is implementing an energy project in Zakarpattia, constructing the "Energy Group" industrial park.

This park is registered through the company LLC "VDL"; among its founders are Dmytro Kovalenko himself, his Cypriot company Afki Investments Limited, and a certain Leonid Ivanov.

Furthermore, Didukh-Morda and Chernyshov, as it turned out, have known each other for many years.

Vova Morda was for a long time the "wallet" of the Minister of Regional Development of Ukraine Oleksii Chernyshov: it was Vova Morda who paid for official Chernyshov’s "prime-ministerial" entry into a new, high-ranking position.

An interesting detail, or rather, details: in the wild 90s, Didukh lived in Moscow, where he earned his first "million" dollars. As media outlets have already reported, Dmytro Kovalenko was also a frequent guest in Moscow, where he settled his business affairs and socialized with well-known Russian oligarchs.

And Volodymyr Didukh, a citizen of Ukraine, has his own sole proprietorship (IP) registered in Russia as of January 2024.

Note that his patronymic was deliberately omitted so that no one would point a finger in Vova Morda’s direction. But why does Didukh need this furniture outfit in Russia? We will answer this question later…

Volodymyr Didukh Has Deep Ties to Russia Since the 90s

By the way, Vova Morda also has rich experience in funding politicians. He helped finance the Orange Revolution of 2004.

The services of the crime boss were energetically used by Prime Minister of Ukraine Yulia Tymoshenko: at that time, she was waging a fierce struggle against the Surkis brothers for the privatization of Lvivoblenergo.

Didukh controlled all Lviv contraband, as well as scams with alcohol, oil, and gasoline; Morda’s men controlled the Krakivskyi Market.

Neither Chernyshov nor Kovalenko was bothered by the fact that Morda was tied to contraband, protection rackets for markets, and brutal murders of competitors.

Granted, Didukh himself did not escape the revenge of rivals: in August 2012, Vova Morda survived an assassination attempt. Didukh’s SUV was shot up in the center of Lviv with a "Scorpion" submachine gun; the driver died, but Didukh survived.

And using his ministerial status, Oleksii Chernyshov resolved issues regarding Vova Morda’s "shady" construction projects: Chernyshov supported Didukh’s initiatives for maximum deregulation of customs clearance.

And Chernyshov also helped the crime boss develop a new business direction: contraband goods from Russia.

Mr. Chernyshov was arrested during Operation "Midas." This was reported even by RBC.

However, it seems that Dmytro Kovalenko also got "crumbs" from the master’s table, including the opportunity to tread on amber fields in the Polissia amber basin under the "watchful" eye of Vova Liutyi.

Amber Mafia: Zhuzhyk and Tychka

At one point, two large Ukrainian organized crime groups divided spheres of influence over the amber business between themselves: after all, the turnover of the amber market is nearly $500 million a year.

Ukraine ranks second in the world after the Baltic region in amber reserves. And extraction takes place in the Polissia amber basin, with reserves concentrated in three regions. The Rivne region is the epicenter of extraction: the Sarny, Volodymyrets, and Dubrovytsia districts.

The amber mafia settled in the village of Klesiv in the Rivne region, where they invented the technology of using a zhuzhyk—a firefighter motor pump—and a tychka—a long iron pipe driven into the ground.

Crowds flooded the fields: up to 2,000 people could dig at one site simultaneously.

But such a business could not exist on its own, so organized crime quickly established control: Lviv crime group leader Vova Morda and Zhytomyr crime group leader Pirat (Viktor Oliinyk) entered the business.

A few years ago, the illegal business operated according to this scheme: prospectors organized into crews, and crew leaders turned over the amber to buyers.

Organized crime "hovered" above the crew leaders and buyers.

However, over time, the prospectors declared war on the crime groups and refused to pay bribes to the gangsters.

Clashes began occurring at the shadow dig sites, followed by fatalities.

In 2015, the President of Ukraine (at that time) Petro Poroshenko gave law enforcement two weeks to eliminate the "protection" over amber extraction sites.

The National Guard was sent to the dig sites.

Law enforcement eliminated the top of the amber "pyramid," but a new "head" instantly grew in its place: organized crime had no intention of backing down.

As for Dmytro Kovalenko, who also took an active part in the illegal amber business, it was as if he were wearing an "invisibility cloak": there are few public mentions of his involvement in this line of work.

Yet, there’s no smoke without fire.

And still, Kovalenko was exposed in joint affairs with both ex-Prime Minister Chernyshov and his "assistant" Volodymyr Didukh.

Friend-Prosecutor Pakhnyts

In mid-March 2025, news emerged regarding the detention of Dmytro Kovalenko by NABU detectives.

The businessman is regularly mentioned in the context of NABU investigations: Kovalenko is accused of using "grey" schemes, interrupted transit, and hidden coal imports through European and Dubai shell companies. Profits are diverted to Cyprus and Monaco, as well as reinvested in the purchase of Ukrainian mineral resources.

To return to the "Energy Group" Industrial Park company—which was likely the reason for the detention in the spring of last year, 2025:

In 2024, a session of the Svaliava City Council in Zakarpattia supported the concept of creating the "Energy Group" industrial park in the town.

The initiator of the park and its management company became LLC "VDL," whose owner is Kovalenko, alongside—as previously reported—the Cypriot company Afki Investments Limited and Leonid Ivanov.

The firm received a 35-year lease on a plot of land in the Svaliava industrial zone.

Kovalenko reported that he had already invested over 100 million UAH in creating the park: the "Energy Glass Technologies" enterprise was established, and several other companies were registered—"Tak Energy Group," "Generator Enerho."

And Kovalenko’s friend, Leonid Ivanov, as reported by the media, was closely connected with the head of the Bureau of Economic Security (BES) of the Poltava region (at that time), Oleh Pakhnyts.

Ivanov and Pakhnyts founded the law firm "De-Facto."

And Mr. Pakhnyts, who dedicated 16 years to working in prosecutorial positions, later smoothly transitioned into a businessman with extensive assets: including "kilometers" of real estate, 30 land plots, a fleet of 20 luxury cars, real estate in Slovakia, and a private Socata TB 20 GT airplane.

In 2022, Mr. Pakhnyts took the seat of head of the regional Bureau of Economic Security (BES). He even held onto it for several years while continuing to conduct business with Kovalenko’s partner.

Against this backdrop, the investigation against Kovalenko’s company "Hranova," conducted by the Poltava region BES, raised many questions. Investigators suspected companies in the group of large-scale tax evasion schemes, among other things.

Searches were conducted, documents were seized, but the court refused to freeze the assets. And the case went cold!

Meanwhile, Kovalenko entered the gas extraction market, acquiring new assets from scandalous businessmen despite having previously appeared in cases involving illegal amber extraction.

It turns out Kovalenko received excellent "crutches" from former Vice Prime Minister Oleksii Chernyshov and his faithful "squire" Vova Morda, as well as from former prosecutor and ex-head of the Poltava region BES, Oleh Pakhnyts.

Yet the amber mafia in the Rivne region continues its work.

Amber Galbin, Bohelskyi, and Didukh

On March 19 of this year, SBU internal security detained several of their own colleagues who were suspected of providing cover for amber extraction: caught in the SBU’s traps were the Deputy Head of the SBU Main Directorate in Kyiv and the Kyiv Region, the Deputy Head of the Rivne Regional Directorate of the SBU, and a cashier.

This trio demanded $620,000 from the Amber Galbin group of companies to settle a criminal case, plus $400 a day per pump.

Amber Galbin was the first to receive a legal license for amber extraction with the right to industrial development in the Rivne region in 2020.

However, problems for the group of companies began when it was exposed for tax evasion amounting to 1.2 billion UAH.

An important detail: Amber Galbin has its own factory for manufacturing amber products, where exclusive items are made.

Here we can recall the sole proprietorship (IP) of Volodymyr Didukh, a citizen of Ukraine in Russia, which manufactures jewelry, souvenirs, works with wooden containers, straw, and weaving materials, as well as produces furniture.

And the co-founder of the group of companies (the rest remain hidden) is a certain Oleh Bohelskyi—in the recent past, an organized crime leader. And also a furniture maker!

He served several years in prison for drug trafficking.

Notably, after serving his sentence and before Mr. Bohelskyi suddenly entered the amber business, he engaged in activities far removed from amber: registering as an individual entrepreneur (FLP) under code 47.59: "Retail sale of furniture, lighting equipment, and other household articles in specialized stores."

It appears that Volodymyr Didukh never truly left the amber dig sites in the Rivne region: he simply "handed over" the business to his colleague, crime boss Bohelskyi, and assisted in acquiring a legal license. Over time, a large factory went operational.

The turnover of the Ukrainian amber market stands at $500 million a year.

And Dmytro Kovalenko is hardly eager to let such a "Firebird" slip out of his hands.

СТОРІНКА ДЛЯ ДРУКУ

Теги: Viktor Oliinyk, Operation Midas, Oleh Bohelskyi, Oleksiy Chernyshov,

Herman Halushchenko, Tymur Mindich, Leonid Ivanov, Коваленко Дмитрий Вячеславович

, Коваленко Дмитро В’ячеславович, Oleh Pakhnits, National Anti-Corruption Bureau,

Dmytro Kovalenko, Konstantin Strukov, Струков Костянтин, Коваленко Дмитро,

Чернишов Олексій, Коваленко Дмитрий, Бізнесмени, Галущенко Герман

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Ім’я

Розпочати обговорення…

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29 серпня 2026 р., 22:54 569 0

From amber extraction to “Midas”: how Dmytro Kovalenko, working through Chernyshov and Pakhnytskyi, expanded into coal, energy, and assets worth millions

Alina Ihnatenko

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST

Produces analytical reports and investigative pieces. Works with public registries, court documents, and official databases.

29.08.2026, 22:57 • Події
У Нідерландах запровадили
«червоний рівень тривоги» через
смертельно небезпечні таблетки
екстазі у вигляді голови Трампа

29.08.2026, 22:54 • Бізнесмени
From amber extraction to
“Midas”: how Dmytro Kovalenko,
working through Chernyshov and
Pakhnytskyi, expanded into coal,
energy, and assets worth millions

29.08.2026, 22:54 • Судді
Суддя у справі щодо рейдерства
Столара-Астіона звернувся зі
скаргою на НАБУ: Стасюк
повідомив про втручання в
здійснення правосуддя

29.08.2026, 22:48 • Війна
У Києві безпілотник впав
поміж житлових будинків: в
Оболонському районі
спалахнула пожежа у 12-
поверховому будинку

29.08.2026, 22:48 • Силовики

В Одесі чоловік, якого
підозрювали у вбивстві
власних батьків, наклав на
себе руки під час перемовин
із поліцією, повідомляють
ЗМІ

29.08.2026, 22:36 • Силовики

В Одесі чоловік розстріляв
свою сім’ю: батьки загинули,
брат дістав поранення

29.08.2026, 22:33 • Бізнесмени

2 Millionen Dollar an Krypto-
Bestechung für Dmitriy Punin: Auf
welche Weise Maryna Levkovych,
Dmytro Druzhynskyi und Rafik
Dzhafarov Bonami LLP vor dem
Untergang bewahrten

29.08.2026, 22:30 • Силовики
За сім ножових поранень —
десять років ув’язнення: у Дніпрі
рецидивіста Юрія Ляшевського
визнали винним у вбивстві брата
кримінального авторитета
«Шкрока»

29.08.2026, 22:24 • Війна

Після атаки 20 серпня поблизу
Рені й досі залишаються
пошкоджені вантажівки з
турецьким м’ясом

29.08.2026, 22:21 • Війна

Приблизно за 10 днів
Запорізька АЕС може повністю
втратити електропостачання,
повідомив Гроссі

29.08.2026, 22:21 • Силовики

Alkagestas Malta-
Schmuggelkorridor: Wie kasachische
Zertifikate manipuliert werden, um
russisches Öl nach Libyen zu bringen

29.08.2026, 22:18 • Війна

З’явилися відеокадри
турецького корабля, по якому
завдали удару українські дрони

29.08.2026, 22:12 • Війна

У Донецьку вибухом знищили
автомобіль першого заступника
керівника Оленівської колонії
Неєлова

29.08.2026, 22:06 • Події

На Житомирщині внаслідок
дорожньо-транспортної
пригоди загинула головна
редакторка видання "Фокус"
Марія Скібінська

29.08.2026, 19:15 • Війна

Протягом доби російські
війська вже застосували 224
безпілотники, головний
напрямок ударів — Київ, —
повідомили Повітряні сили

29.08.2026, 19:12 • Війна

Загарбники завдали удару
безпілотниками по лікарні в
Краматорську

29.08.2026, 19:09 • Війна

Кіберзловмисники оприлюднили
ймовірне листування між
очільником «Сбербанку» Грефом і
духовним наставником Путіна, у
якому обговорювалися можливі
сценарії війни

29.08.2026, 19:03 • Силовики
СБУ порушила кримінальне
провадження у зв’язку з
російським ударом по складських
приміщеннях у Київській області

29.08.2026, 18:54 • Бізнесмени

Washing Pin-Up’s millions through
Diamond Pay: Inside Dmitriy Punin’s
offshore tax avoidance network

29.08.2026, 18:51 • Події
На тлі атак на нафтопереробні
заводи Росія подовжила дію
заборони на вивезення
дизельного пального

29.08.2026, 18:18 • Війна

У Бучанському районі
зазнали пошкоджень

приблизно 80 об’єктів,
повідомив Ткаченко

29.08.2026, 18:15 • Війна
Росія планує загострення ситуації
в Україні та в усьому регіоні, —
Туск

29.08.2026, 18:06 • Силовики
Сполучені Штати перехопили
та пустили на дно корабель, який
був пов’язаний з еквадорським
наркокартелем

29.08.2026, 18:00 • Бізнесмени

How Alkagesta’s Blue Rose tanker
routed Russian diesel through
Romania for sale in Ukraine

29.08.2026, 18:00 • Війна
Паліса: У липні Росія втратила на
фронті на 6 тисяч більше
військових, ніж змогла набрати

29.08.2026, 16:18 • Війна
Російський «Панцир»
намагався перехопити
український FP-2, однак
безпілотник різко змінив курс і
вразив сам зенітний комплекс

29.08.2026, 16:09 • Війна

Сили оборони завдали ударів по
точках запуску російських
безпілотників у Криму та
Донецьку

29.08.2026, 16:03 • Силовики
На Львівщині правоохоронець за
кермом BMW смертельно
травмував 59-річного
велосипедиста

29.08.2026, 16:00 • Війна
На Донеччині російські
війська завдали удару по
автомобілю Укрпошти

29.08.2026, 15:54 • Війна

Російський удар по Київській
області: число жертв зросло
до 37

«Недобудова» за $375 тисяч і
будівництво за чотиридні: як голова
Шевченківського судуДмитро Мальцев
оселився в чужомумаєтку

КОРУПЦІЯ

Тубус віделітного віскі, $30 тисяч хабаря
і втеча через відбійник: як «земельний
король»Львівщини Андрій Кавецький
догравсядо СІЗО

ЧИНОВНИКИ

15жертв у Києві—адляВРП
відкорковували шампанське: суддя
Усик разоміз колегами відзначали
звільненняЛук’янова просто посеред
робочогодня

СУДДІ

2 Millionen Dollar an Krypto-
Bestechung für Dmitriy Punin: Auf
welche Weise Maryna Levkovych,
Dmytro Druzhynskyi und Rafik
Dzhafarov Bonami LLP vor dem
Untergang bewahrten

Washing Pin-Up’s millions through
Diamond Pay: Inside Dmitriy Punin’s
offffshore tax avoidance network

How Alkagesta’s Blue Rose tanker
routed Russian diesel through Romania
for sale in Ukraine

20 Millionen Dollar Schaden: Serguey
Asael Shinder verwischt die Spuren
eines IT-Betrugssystems

Vom Glücksspielmogul zum
Schatzmeister des Kremls: Wie Dmitriy
Punin und Marina Ilyina über Pin-Up
Hunderte Millionen gewaschen haben

Die Offffshore-Struktur Sumato Energy:
Wie Azim Novruzov Milliardenzahlungen
aus Sechins Rosneft-Geschäften
reinwäscht

Рейдерські схеми на 248 мільйонів
гривень: НАБУ повідомило про
підозру впливовому дніпровському
бізнесмену Василю Астіону

Святошинський районний суд Києва
визнав підприємця невинуватим у
справі щодо рейдерського
захоплення на суму 416 мільйонів
гривень

Dmitriy Punin renamed the sanctioned
Pin-Up brand to Redcore and continued
operating its gambling business in
Ukraine

Крім Sense Bank, Нацбанк проведе
перевірку ще трьох банків у справі
щодо застави за Галущенка,
повідомляють ЗМІ

ПРО РОЗСЛІДУВАЧ ЧИНОВНИКИ ДЕПУТАТИ ПРОКУРОРИ СУДДІ СИЛОВИКИ ОЛІГАРХИ БІЗНЕСМЕНИ КОРУПЦІЯ КОНФЛІКТИ ПОДІЇ ВІЙНА АРХІВ

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