

Ukraine War Threatens Biden Megadonor

Government ethics watchdogs say the president's friendship poses a potential conflict of interest. How has massive foreign aid been used, and who has benefited from it?

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Global Research, May 30, 2023

[American Greatness](#) 27 May 2023

Region: [Europe](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy isn't the only one demanding more military assistance from Joe Biden to protect Kiev from Russian forces. So, too, is a close Biden friend and financial backer, who owns several luxury car dealerships around the Ukrainian capital.



By sending billions of dollars in weapons and other military aid to help defend Ukraine, Biden also is securing the investments of millionaire car magnate John Hynansky, a Ukrainian American and longtime supporter of the president.

Over the course of Biden's political career, Hynansky and his family have contributed more than \$100,000 to his campaigns, Federal Election Commission records show. Hynansky family members have been guests at the White House, and Hynansky has floated hundreds of thousands of dollars in loans to Biden family members, property records show. Hynansky's son, Michael, who helps run his car empire, lent the use of his Lear jet to Biden when he was a senator.

Since Russia started shelling the area around Kiev in February 2022, the U.S. government

has spent [\\$77 billion](#) to help Ukraine rebuild and repel future attacks.

Government ethics watchdogs say the president's friendship poses a potential conflict of interest that demands a full accounting of how the massive foreign aid, which includes open-ended humanitarian and economic assistance, has been used and who has benefited from it. On the military side, moreover, billions of dollars have gone to unspecified areas, such as "security," "intelligence," and "training." In the past, Hynansky has supplied the police cars and ambulances in several regions of Ukraine.

The Biden Administration helped Hynansky's team in Ukraine prepare for the invasion, including placing calls to his top executive in Kiev 13 days in advance of Russian tanks crossing the border. It has sent billions of dollars to help rebuild war-torn cities where Hynansky operates the largest share of the country's car showrooms and service centers specializing in Porsches, Jaguars, Land Rovers, and Bentleys, among other non-American brands he imports.

The president's close relationship with Hynansky illustrates larger ethical questions that have long surrounded Biden and his family members, who often have financial interests directly affected by policies he endorses. While serving as President Obama's point man in Ukraine in 2015, Biden demanded the firing of a prosecutor investigating a natural gas company, Burisma, that was paying his son Hunter \$80,000 per month to serve on its board.

The connection between Joe Biden and Hynansky's business ventures dates back to 2009, when the then-vice president made his first visit to Ukraine. In a [speech](#) in Kiev to government officials, Biden singled out Hynansky for praise, noting that he had just had breakfast with "[my very good friend, John Hynansky.](#)" (The previous year, Hynansky had contributed more than \$33,000 to the Obama-Biden ticket primarily through the Obama Victory Fund, according to FEC records.)

Within months of his hobnobbing with the vice president and local officials in the Ukrainian capital, Hynansky scored his first international development loan from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation, or OPIC, a federal body whose board was appointed by President Obama. Hynansky used the \$2.5 million to break ground on a new headquarters and massive distribution center outside Kiev that prepares 8,000 cars for sale every year. In 2012, Hynansky landed another \$20 million in OPIC funding to expand his dealership facilities, [federal records show](#), helping him corner roughly 25 percent of the luxury car market in Ukraine.

Hynansky is politically connected in Kiev as well as Washington. President Zelenskyy also calls Hynansky a good friend and in recent years has bestowed state awards on him. Kiev mayor Vitali Klitschko also is close to the prominent Wilmington businessman.

In August 2021, Hynansky [secured](#) a \$24 million loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to expand its Ukraine operations into electric vehicles, including building new Renault and Volvo dealerships in Lviv. The U.S. is a founding member of EBRD and provides 10 percent of its capital. The Biden Administration has been pushing such "green" deals. "In the near future, we intend to increase our presence on the Ukrainian market," Hynansky's top official in Ukraine, Petro Rondiak, said at the time.

The White House did not respond to queries about the president's relationship with Hynansky.

Though Biden is silent about his actions in Ukraine as they concern Hynansky and his businesses there, he has repeatedly denied that his son's Burisma dealings influenced his official actions in Ukraine—which included handing over more than \$50 million in U.S. support to assist the Ukrainian energy industry, an aid package Biden personally announced in Kiev the month before Burisma hired his son in 2014.

Republicans are investigating whether those funds were intended to help his son's business interests in Ukraine. Less explored is whether U.S. tax money has also been used to protect or boost Hynansky's Ukrainian investments.

Paul Kamenar, counsel to the National Legal and Policy Center, a Washington watchdog group said that in dealing with Ukraine, Biden increasingly is drawing suspicion he may be putting his own political fortunes ahead of the national interest.

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