

WAR

Zelensky dismisses high-ranking SBU official, demands investigation after shootout between Ukraine's security services in Kyiv

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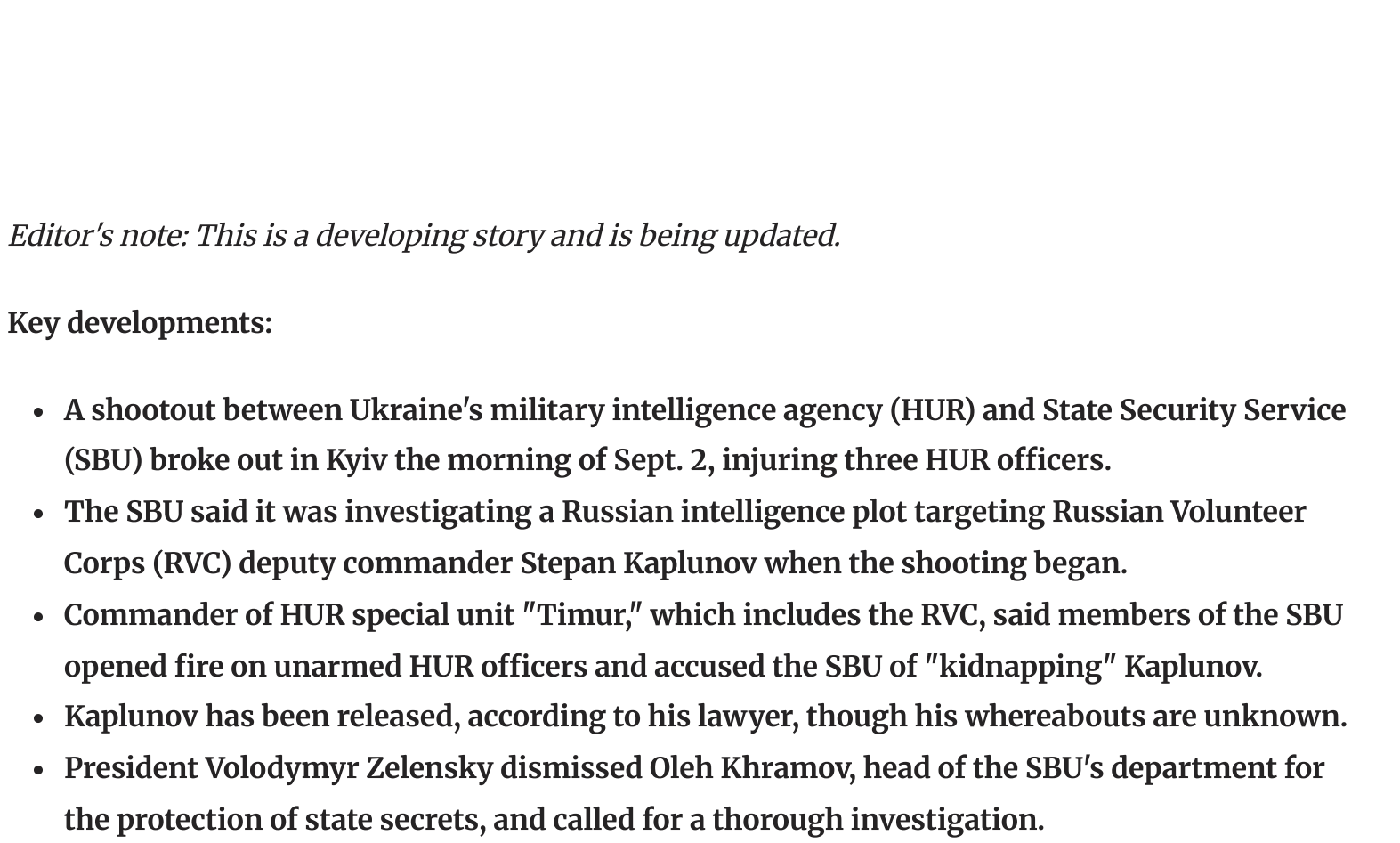
🕒 (Updated: September 2, 2026 10:20 pm)

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by Jonas Heins, Polina Moroziuk, Abbey Fenbert



Training of special units of the SBU near Kyiv, Ukraine on March 24, 2018. (Maxym Marusenko/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

Editor's note: This is a developing story and is being updated.

Key developments:

- A shootout between Ukraine's military intelligence agency (HUR) and State Security Service (SBU) broke out in Kyiv the morning of Sept. 2, injuring three HUR officers.
- The SBU said it was investigating a Russian intelligence plot targeting Russian Volunteer Corps (RVC) deputy commander Stepan Kaplunov when the shooting began.
- Commander of HUR special unit "Timur," which includes the RVC, said members of the SBU opened fire on unarmed HUR officers and accused the SBU of "kidnapping" Kaplunov.
- Kaplunov has been released, according to his lawyer, though his whereabouts are unknown.
- President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed Oleh Khramov, head of the SBU's department for the protection of state secrets, and called for a thorough investigation.

A shootout between two branches of Ukraine's security services broke out on the morning of Sept. 2 during an investigation into Russian opposition figure Stepan Kaplunov.

Ukraine's State Security Service ([SBU](#)) said it was investigating an alleged Russian terrorist plot against a member of the Russian opposition. Earlier, a source in Ukraine's Defense Forces told the Kyiv Independent that the target of the plot was Kaplunov, deputy commander of the [Russian Volunteer Corps](#) (RVC), a paramilitary unit that fights alongside Kyiv.

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The RVC is subordinate to Ukraine's military intelligence agency (HUR).

Kaplunov had been in Ukraine for Independence Day celebrations on Aug. 24 but was "abducted by unknown individuals in the courtyard of his home," the RVC wrote on Telegram on Sept. 1.

As authorities announced that the alleged plot had been thwarted, reports of a shootout in [Kyiv](#) began to emerge.

A Russian terrorist plot

According to Ukraine's Prosecutor General's Office, SBU officers were attacked by "one of the units of the Defense Forces of Ukraine" while conducting an investigation into the alleged plot.

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"During the investigative actions in the proceedings regarding the terrorist act of the [FSB](#) of the Russian Federation, an armed attack occurred on SBU officers," it said in a post on Telegram.

"During the cessation of armed resistance, law enforcement officers used weapons," it added.

Speaking to journalists, Presidential Adviser Dmytro Lytvyn said the two units involved were the SBU and Ukraine's military intelligence ([HUR](#)). He added that President [Volodymyr Zelensky](#) had "called out" the heads of both and ordered them to inform the public about what was happening.

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'Kidnapped in broad daylight'

Kaplunov's lawyer and a HUR unit commander told a different version of events.

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The commander of HUR's special unit "Timur," which includes the RVC, [said](#) in a video published by Radio Liberty / Radio Free Europe that Kaplunov had been "kidnapped in broad daylight" by members of the SBU and held without charges.

After negotiating an agreement on legal procedures, the commander said the SBU began arresting HUR representatives. He alleged that the SBU opened fire on unarmed HUR officers.

Taras Borovskiy, a lawyer representing Kaplunov, told [Ukrainian TV](#) that HUR service members were injured in the shootout, two of them seriously.

"One was shot in the leg and had an artery severed, and he was bleeding out. He is in very serious condition in a medical facility. The second is also in serious condition in hospital. The third is more lightly wounded," Borovskiy [told](#) Ukrainska Pravda.

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Borovskiy, who said he was at the scene, also alleged that SBU officers had carried out an emergency nighttime search of Kaplunov's apartment without allowing his lawyer inside and without a court warrant.

He questioned why the search was carried out on Sept. 1 if Kaplunov had already been detained on Aug. 23, and said he still had not been told why his client was detained.

The lawyer also rejected the SBU's claim that it had foiled an assassination attempt against Kaplunov, calling it an attempt to justify what he described as an extrajudicial detention and a "PR move."

Borovskiy also said the "Timur" commander was present during the investigative actions and conducted negotiations between representatives of the two security services.

Kaplunov has since been released, the lawyer said, though his whereabouts are unknown.

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Demands for accountability

Zelensky later [called](#) the incident "an absolutely disgraceful situation" involving SBU and HUR units and said Prosecutor General Ruslan Kravchenko and the State Bureau of Investigation would determine what happened.

The president said those responsible must be held accountable, including through possible personnel decisions by the heads of the security services and internal investigations by both agencies.

"Here in Ukraine, one can shoot only at the Russian occupiers in defense of Ukraine," Zelensky said. "No other shootout will ever be perceived by our state as something that anyone is allowed to do."

Zelensky then signed a presidential decree [dismissing](#) Oleg Khramov, head of the SBU's department for the protection of state secrets,

President's Office Head [Kyrylo Budanov](#) called for a "thorough and impartial investigation," [RBC Ukraine](#) reported.

Past clashes between HUR and SBU

Violent incidents involving HUR and the SBU are rare but not unheard of.

In March 2022, the body of banker Denys Kireyev was thrown from a van in central Kyiv with a gunshot to the head.

Kireyev had been working for HUR and was credited with [obtaining information](#) about Russia's full-scale invasion plans that helped Ukraine to defend against the Kremlin's initial plans to take Kyiv.

He was subsequently involved in the ultimately fruitless peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow in 2022, but fell under suspicion of treason and accusations of being a [double agent](#) working for Russia.

In 2023, Budanov, then-head of HUR, denied Kireyev was working for Russia and claimed he had been killed by members of the SBU.

"I share the opinion and believe the facts that Mr Kireyev was killed in the SBU car when they conducted an operation against this person," he said.

The President's Office, in a 2023 statement, said Kireyev's death was "connected with the [poor coordination](#) of the Ukrainian special services at the beginning of the war."

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Catherine Beck

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The SBU's version does not seem believable.

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L

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10 hours ago

Thanks for trying, but no you have to explain what these two agencies are supposed to be doing, and you also have to explain whether this RUSSIAN in UKRAINE armed forces is truly a UKRAINE partisan or just a RUSSIAN spy.

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