

Zelenskiy fires head of air force after fatal crash of donated F-16 fighter jet

Mykola Oleshchuk's dismissal thought to be linked to death of pilot and loss of plane newly delivered to Ukraine

Volodymyr Zelenskiy has fired the head of Ukraine's air force a day after it emerged that a recently delivered F-16 jet had crashed earlier this week, killing the pilot.

"I have decided to replace the commander of the air forces ... I am eternally grateful to all our military pilots," Zelenskiy said in his evening video address on Friday, without giving a reason for the dismissal of Mykola Oleshchuk.

But Zelenskiy spoke of the need to "protect" the lives of those defending the country, suggesting the dismissal is probably related to the F-16 crash in which Lt Col Oleksiy Mes died. The arrival of the F-16s, donated by a number of European nations, was delayed due to the lengthy training programme required for pilots and ground staff to be able to operate the aircraft.

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