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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KIEV 001036

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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION BEFORE AND AFTER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: Various interlocutors assessed the prospects for UKRAINE's drive toward NATO membership after the March 26 parliamentary elections during visits to Kiev by EUR DAS David Kramer's March 13 and by Project for Transitional Democracies head Bruce Jackson March 4-8. Deputy Foreign Minister Buteyko said NATO should grant MAP status to UKRAINE at the April NATO ministerial in Sofia. He argued that Ukrainian foreign policy would stay on course after the elections since the President was constitutionally responsible for foreign policy and, even under constitutional reform, he would select the Foreign and Defense Ministers. Others were not so sure. Former Deputy Foreign Minister Oleksandr Chaly felt that only a coalition between the pro-presidential Our UKRAINE bloc and Yuliya Tymoshenko bloc (BYuT) would maintain the same pace toward NATO membership. Defense Minister Hrytsenko suggested the best outcome would be a "grand coalition" uniting the "Orange team" with the "Blue" Party of Regions. Former Foreign Minister Zlenko, however, argued that the leadership within any coalition, whether Our UKRAINE's or Regions', would determine whether a grand, or any other, coalition was a plus for Euro-Atlantic integration; BYuT foreign policy adviser Nemyrya opined that a grand coalition would not actively support NATO membership. DefMin Hrytsenko said that NATO could better demonstrate the concrete benefits of joining the alliance and suggested that funding of a project to destroy "melange" rocket fuel would have a positive public relations impact. Foreign Ministry officials were regularly visiting regional towns and cities as part of a NATO education campaign. End summary.

2. (U) At Charge's March 13 dinner in DAS Kramer's honor, attendees included former Foreign Ministers Kostyantyn Hryshchenko and Anatoly Zlenko, Party of Regions foreign policy adviser Leonid Kozhara, Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko (BYuT)



foreign policy adviser Hyrhoriy Nemyrya, and former SBU Chief Ihor Smeshko. They exchanged opinions on UKRAINE's likely Euro-Atlantic integration policy after the March 26 parliamentary elections. Earlier, during a March 4-8 visit to Kiev of Bruce Jackson, we also heard various views during meetings with a range of figures, including Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko, Deputy Foreign Minister Anton Buteyko, National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) Deputy Secretary Serhiy Pyrozhkov, and former Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Hayduk. Washington-based foreign policy and national security analyst Randy Scheunemann, who arrived the afternoon of March 7, joined Jackson for the meeting with Hrytsenko. Views on NATO were also exchanged during NATO Liaison Officer Director Jim Greene's March 7 dinner in honor of Jackson and Scheunemann with Deputy DefMin Leonid Polyakov and directors and deputy directors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Cabinet of Ministers, and Presidential Administration.

MAP in April, please  
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3. (C) In a March 6 meeting with Jackson, DFM Buteyko argued for a formal decision on a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the April 27 meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Sofia. He had made the rounds of NATO capitals with a letter from President Yushchenko containing this suggestion; Foreign Minister Tarasyuk went to Washington March 9-10 carrying a revised President Yushchenko letter that contained this point and other bilateral issues. Buteyko emphasized that UKRAINE's relationship with NATO should continue to be conducted on a "business-as-usual" basis even during the run-up to the March 26 parliamentary elections. There was no question that the elections would be free and fair. As a political party leader (deputy leader of the solidly Orange Ukrainian People's Party), he could attest to the immense difference between the current campaign and the 2004 presidential campaign.

4. (C) Buteyko said he understood that NATO members wanted to see how the parliamentary elections would be conducted and whether a pro-European majority would emerge. Buteyko said he was positive the next parliament would be led by pro-presidential, "Orange Team" forces. Even if Party of Regions and former Prime Minister Yanukovych were to hold sway, powerful forces in Parliament would ensure a pro-NATO momentum. The elections would reform a parliamentary structure that had been created to cement ex-President Kuchma's hold on power. Fringe parties excepted, there was broad agreement, even in Bloc Yuliya Tymoshenko and the opposition Party of Regions, on the Ukrainian government's

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foreign policy. Buteyko assured Jackson that any variety of parliamentary coalitions would preserve UKRAINE's Euro-Atlantic momentum. Yushchenko would still be president and, even with constitutional reform, he controlled the nominations for Foreign and Defense Minister. Economic policy might change, but not foreign policy, Buteyko averred.

5. (C) Jackson questioned the timing of the Ukrainian push for a MAP decision in Sofia. He said NATO allies had already decided not to make any decision on enlargement in Sofia. With uncertainty over the details of UKRAINE's natural gas deal with Russia, NATO members were unlikely to rush to judgment regarding UKRAINE's qualifications, and the U.S. Mission to NATO was unlikely to push a decision in this context. Jackson advised Buteyko to be patient and wait

until the Defense Ministerial in June, which would still permit UKRAINE to have two full MAP cycles (which start in September) before NATO's enlargement summit in 2008. Buteyko responded that a NATO MAP decision would be perceived as the regional community's positive judgment of the new government and would serve to energize the Ukrainian bureaucracy. (Note: NATO Liaison Office's Greene observed to us that the MFA push for an April decision might have more to do with the MFA bureaucracy's desire to have the Foreign Minister be the one to bring MAP to UKRAINE from the April summit rather than allowing the Defense Minister to do so in June.)

On the Other Hand  
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6. (C) In making his case, Buteyko conceded that the level of political support for NATO membership was low. He said that, of the 45 blocs and political parties contesting the parliamentary elections, only the platform for his bloc, the Ukrainian People's Bloc of Kostenko and Plyushch (note: Buteyko is number 19 on the bloc's list of parliamentary candidates), unequivocally describes NATO membership as a Ukrainian objective. The Our UKRAINE bloc only mentions a European course, while the pro-European PORA-Reforms and Order Party bloc and the Socialist Party make no mention of Euro-Atlantic integration or NATO membership. Buteyko said the political parties were generally shying away from the issue of NATO membership due to the fact that only 30 percent of the Ukrainian public supported it. On the opposition side, however, the Ne Tak bloc was actively pushing a referendum on NATO membership and exploiting NATO as a political issue (note: as is Vitrenko's People's Opposition bloc and, at times, Regions).

7. (C) Former Deputy Foreign Minister Oleksandr Chaly accentuated the negative prospects for NATO membership in his meeting with Jackson later on March 6. Chaly, who personally advocates neutrality for UKRAINE along a Swedish model, said the Rada (parliament) would determine the mandate for UKRAINE's foreign policy and that this mandate would depend on the shape of the Rada's governing coalition. The best possibility for Euro-Atlantic integration would develop from a coalition between pro-Yushchenko Our UKRAINE bloc and BYuT. Any other coalition was likely to maintain the same policy line, but would not actively move toward NATO. There was a real possibility that the Ne Tak bloc, which includes the Social Democratic Party of UKRAINE (united) SDPU(o), might be able to realize its initiative for a NATO referendum in the next half year. SDPU(o) had collected the requisite number of signatures. Now the Central Election Commission needed to review the petition, after which the Rada needed to pass a resolution endorsing the referendum.

8. (C) At Greene's dinner, Deputy DefMin Polyakov told Jackson that, while UKRAINE's Euro-Atlantic course would be maintained, the shape of a parliamentary coalition would determine whether progress toward NATO would be faster or slower. In a March 8 meeting, DefMin Hrytsenko said the best post-election possibility for a vigorous Euro-Atlantic integration policy lay in a "grand coalition" of Our UKRAINE bloc, BYuT, and Party of Regions. Any other grouping, he suggested, controlling only about 230 votes, would not be effective, since such a coalition would need a very high degree of unity to maintain its control.

9. (C) BYuT's Nemyrya told Kramer, however, that such a grand coalition, which was more than a hypothetical possibility, would return UKRAINE's NATO policy to the situation existing in 2000-2002 (i.e., when the government paid lip-service to the goal of NATO membership but made no real effort to

achieve it). He asserted that foreign policy would be a victim to the difference in grand coalition partners' strategic visions and that such a grouping would "be an amalgam, not a coalition." Foreign policy analyst Oleksandr Sushko said an "Orange Team" coalition, if it included the

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Socialist Party, would also be an "amalgam." Zlenko noted that, even in government, the Socialists had been unequivocally opposed to NATO membership (note: the Socialist Party's formal position is in favor of Partnership for Peace cooperation, but remaining neutral without joining any alliances). UKRAINE post-election foreign policy would depend on whether the Our UKRAINE bloc or Party of Regions exercised leadership within a grand, or other, coalition.

The Ukrainian Mood

10. (C) At Charge's dinner for DAS Kramer, Party of Regions foreign policy adviser Kozhara said ironically that he would prefer NATO provide MAP to UKRAINE before the parliamentary elections because such a step would cause the Our UKRAINE bloc to lose some electoral support to Regions. Regions was not opposed to NATO membership, he claimed, but preferred to cooperate with NATO to enhance mutual security, for example, in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, and in the conduct of military exchanges and exercises. With only 16-17 percent of Ukrainians favoring NATO membership, UKRAINE was not yet ready to join the alliance. BYuT's Nemyrya rebutted Kozhara's claim, asserting that support for NATO membership would be political suicide for Regions' leader Viktor Yanukovych

11. (C) At the same dinner, ex-Foreign Minister Zlenko declared the Ukrainian government faced a serious public relations problem with NATO membership, support for which had once stood as high as 40 percent, but now at 16 percent. The parliamentary election campaign had polarized the public on the issue, with more against than for. Zlenko and Hryshchenko both argued the Ukrainian government needed to demonstrate the concrete benefits of NATO membership. Zlenko said, early on, NATO had take positive steps such as by destroying land mines, but the current emphasis on military reform and joint exercises did not resonate with the Ukrainian public. After the elections, the Rada had the potential of improving public opinion toward NATO if the institution took a strong stance in favor of NATO membership. Hryshchenko said the Ukrainian public was interested first and foremost in bread-and-butter issues. The Ukrainian government should package NATO membership as part of its drive toward achieving European social and economic standards. He said, after the elections, the choice of prime minister would be critical, since he or she would represent the majority voice within parliament.

12. (U) Note: When the Razumkov Center asked 2009 respondents December 20-27, 2005, "would you vote for or against NATO membership should the referendum be held today," 61.4 percent responded that they would vote against, 16 percent would vote in favor, 17.9 percent were undecided, and 4.7 percent would refuse to participate in a referendum. Poll numbers on NATO membership vary widely depending on the specific wording of the question.

In the Hustings

13. (C) MFA NATO Directorate Deputy Director Vladyslav Yasnyuk told Jackson that, as part of the NATO education campaign, he visited regional towns and cities on an average of two days per week. MFA's education effort was directed toward four principal audiences. First, MFA officials attempted to inform security specialists and journalists, providing them with arguments and background that could be used to frame and inform the debate over NATO membership. Second, MFA officials met with local government officials to brief them on central government security policy and policy toward NATO. Third, MFA officials met with students, 70 percent of whom supported NATO membership. Finally, MFA attempted to educate the general public, who had a low level of knowledge and awareness of NATO. While about two-thirds of the public were opposed to NATO membership or undecided, Yasniuk said hostility toward NATO was not strong. The Ukrainian public, however, generally preferred that UKRAINE remain a neutral country. Many Ukrainians did not want their country to be militarily aligned with either NATO or Russia.

14. (C) Buteyko related an incident demonstrating that a NATO education campaign could make rapid gains. He said that he, Defense Minister Hrytsenko, and presidential adviser Horbulin had appeared on a 1 1/2 hour television program. At the start of the program, 38 percent of program viewers were in favor of NATO membership and 62 percent were against. Buteyko said that, at the end of the program, the NATO support level had risen ten percent among those who had seen the broadcast.

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Melange Rocket Fuel  
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15. (C) DefMin Hrytsenko told Jackson a NATO education campaign had to overcome various myths about the consequences of NATO membership (e.g., that NATO membership would lead to the stationing of nuclear weapons in UKRAINE, result in the basing of NATO troops on Ukrainian soil, cause UKRAINE to become involved in every NATO military operation, and weaken UKRAINE's military-industrial complex). In addition, the public needed to be informed as to how NATO membership would concretely benefit Ukrainians. As it stood, the Ukrainian public did not understand why the Ukrainian government was footing the bill to transport Organization of African Unity peacekeeping forces to Darfur, Sudan.

16. (SBU) With both DAS Kramer and Jackson, Hrytsenko urged the USG to consider funding the elimination of stores of melange rocket fuel, which posed an environmental and safety threat to UKRAINE. In the meeting with Jackson, Hrytsenko argued that rather than elimination of TU-22 Backfire Bombers, which created some controversy, the Ukrainian public would be very favorably impressed by Nunn-Lugar funding to dispose of the rocket fuel. Hrytsenko said he had been surprised to hear that the U.S. Defense Department opposed USG funding for such an effort. Scheunemann agreed that rocket fuel elimination could fall within the scope of the Nunn-Lugar program and promised to investigate further upon his return to the U.S.

17. (U) DAS Kramer did not have an opportunity to clear this message.

18. (U) Visit Embassy Kiev's classified website:

www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.  
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Website pages 