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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: BILATERAL COORDINATION GROUP TALKS: NATO,
IRAQ, KOSOVO, TRANSNISTRIA, BELARUS

Classified By: Ambassador for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: In Bilateral Coordination Group talks January 24, ASD/ISP Flory and EUR A/S Fried noted U.S. support for UKRAINE's NATO aspirations, but emphasized the importance of UKRAINE demonstrating that it shared the political, economic, and social values required to meet the performance-based requirements for NATO membership. Deputy Foreign Minister Volodymyr Khandohiy appealed for U.S. support for UKRAINE receiving NATO MAP status in 2006; President Yushchenko had asked DFM Anton Buteyko to travel to NATO capitals to lobby for UKRAINE's NATO membership. ASD Flory described the shift of the international community's efforts in Iraq away from primarily military support toward assistance in strengthening Iraq's political, economic, and security structures and invited UKRAINE to join in this effort. Economics Ministry official Voitko said the Ukrainians hoped to table a list of proposed projects for Iraq at the next Bilateral Coordination Group round.

2. (C) Summary cont.: During a discussion of regional issues, MFA Special Negotiator Tkach said Moldovan procrastination in amending its "resolution 815" (as part of Moldova's implementation of a Ukrainian-Moldovan customs protocol) would be the first agenda item in the next round of five-plus-two talks on Transnistria. A/S Fried stressed that any future settlement should not negatively affect Moldova's territorial integrity. On Belarus, A/S Fried reported that he and an EC official were prepared to visit Minsk and meet with the Belarusian Foreign Minister or President Lukashenko himself to warn that a fraudulent presidential election would have consequences. MFA Second Territorial Directorate Deputy Director Prokopchuk said UKRAINE would remain engaged on Belarus and suggested that foreign donors consider sending

Belarusian students to UKRAINE for exposure to a more democratic country. On Kosovo, A/S Wayne described the special circumstances surrounding the Kosovo status question, and Khandohiy stressed that any settlement should not be allowed to serve as a precedent for separatist movements



elsewhere. End summary.

3. (U) A U.S. delegation headed by EUR A/S Fried and including EB A/S Wayne, ASD/ISP Flory, NSC Director Wilson and Ambassador participated January 24 in Bilateral Coordination Group discussions with a Ukrainian delegation headed by DFM Volodymyr Khandohiy. Discussions reported below cover NATO, Iraq, Transnistria, Belarus and Kosovo; other topics reported septels.

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4. (C) Noting the door was always open for participation in NATO, ASD Flory said the U.S. strongly supported Ukrainian aspirations for NATO membership. At the same time, the onus was on UKRAINE to demonstrate that it had implemented political and military reforms and shared the political, economic, and social values required to join the performance-based organization. ASD Flory complimented UKRAINE for its significant progress in military reform, particularly in the last year, both in carrying forward existing programs as well as in adopting new legislation allowing new programs to begin.

5. (C) ASD Flory praised UKRAINE's contributions to international security, beginning in the mid-1990s in Bosnia, following through with contributions of forces for Iraq and Kosovo, and looking forward to future participation in 2006 in Operation Active Endeavor. UKRAINE had provided welcome relief assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for which the U.S. was particularly grateful, and after the Pakistan earthquake. ASD Flory welcomed UKRAINE's decision to contribute airlift for transport of African Union troops to Sudan. He said the U.S. was ready to assist in the transformation of UKRAINE's military so that it could be more capable to respond to future challenges.

6. (C) A/S Fried noted that, throughout the process of NATO enlargement, membership in NATO hinged not so much on NATO's views but on the determination of the candidate country to join. When countries such as Poland and Romania moved decisively forward in their bids for membership, opinion within NATO consolidated in their favor. A/S Fried noted that public attitudes in NATO candidate countries were more important than many people realized. NATO, while not yet concerned, was mindful of the low levels of popular support within UKRAINE for NATO membership. NATO would look to the Ukrainian government to implement a public education campaign after the March 2006 parliamentary elections.

7. (C) MFA NATO Department Deputy Director Vladislav Yasnyuk acknowledged that Ukrainian public opinion was divided on NATO membership, with about a third of the population in favor, a third opposed, and the remainder undecided. The Ukrainian government had appropriated funds for a public education effort only about a year ago, but UKRAINE was encouraged by the example of new NATO members that had been able to double public acceptance of NATO membership to the 60-70 percent range in two or three years. Furthermore, Ukrainian law designated NATO membership as an element of its approach to national security. The parliamentary action provided the foundation for unified action by the government's executive and legislative branches. Finally, President Yushchenko had identified NATO membership as an important goal of Ukrainian foreign policy.

8. (C) DFM Khandohiy said the NATO Membership Action Plan

(MAP) was the main priority of UKRAINE's interaction with NATO. UKRAINE hoped to be included in what NATO itself had identified as the "NATO enlargement summit" in 2008. Much work remained to be done to achieve this goal, however. MAP would provide the impetus and the framework for the necessary steps to move toward NATO membership, Khandohiy emphasized. If NATO approved a Ukrainian MAP early in 2006, then UKRAINE would have more than two full MAP cycles, which normally started in September, before the 2008 summit. He asked for USG support for a NATO-UKRAINE meeting on the margins of the NATO informal summit in Sofia to consider this possibility further.

9. (C) Khandohiy said President Yushchenko had recently designated Deputy Foreign Minister Anton Buteyko as his Special Representative for NATO. Yushchenko had asked Buteyko to visit NATO capitals in this capacity with a letter from Yushchenko underscoring UKRAINE's desire to receive a MAP this year.

Iraq

10. (C) ASD Flory expressed U.S. appreciation for UKRAINE's contribution to Iraq. UKRAINE had contributed forces to the Multinational Forces and continued to play a role by providing personnel to military headquarters and for the NATO training mission. The U.S. also appreciated the extensive consultations and sensitivity with which UKRAINE had reduced its Iraq contribution. U.S. and international efforts in Iraq had now transitioned to the next step of helping Iraq build its own institutions and fill the vacuum created by the departure of the Hussein regime. The conduct of three elections, and increasing voter participation, attested to the effectiveness of these efforts. The economic dimension of the new strategy aimed to establish a real and sustainable economy that would demonstrate the new government's capacity to improve the daily lives of ordinary Iraqis. Efforts to improve security would begin to put greater emphasis on the professionalism of police forces. In a telling sign of the Iraqi government's greater legitimacy, U.S. military commanders were reporting a tenfold increase of information from the Iraqi population on insurgency forces.

11. (C) A/S Fried reiterated ASD Flory's expressions of appreciation for Ukrainian contributions to Iraq under difficult circumstances. He said the coalition's contributions would be judged by the outcome of events in Iraq, which now appeared more likely to be positive than negative.

12. (C) MFA Third Territorial Directorate Deputy Director Pasko described UKRAINE's contributions to Iraq and said UKRAINE looked forward to greater trilateral cooperation with Iraq and the United States. Economics Ministry Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Director Yaroslav Voitko said UKRAINE was interested in helping to develop Iraq's energy sector. In the next round of the Bilateral Coordination Group, the Ukrainian delegation hoped to provide a list of potential projects in which Ukrainian companies could join with U.S. partners to develop energy-related projects in Iraq either as principal implementers or as sub-contractors.

Transnistria

13. (C) MFA Special Negotiator for Transnistria Dmytro Tkach said the Yushchenko plan had been designed to unblock the Transnistria negotiation process and move it toward a proper

dialogue among all sides. The plan had overcome Moldovan refusal to negotiate with the Transnistrian authorities, which Moldova referred to as a "bandit regime," by establishing a multilateral negotiation process. Until now, UKRAINE had been allowing transit of Transnistrian goods under an old Commonwealth of Independent States agreement. As the result of an agreement signed by the Ukrainian and Moldovan Prime Ministers December 30, UKRAINE had resolved to implement a new customs regime for Transnistrian goods. This, however, required the Moldovan government to modify its "resolution 815," which it had not yet done. UKRAINE had proposed that the lack of Moldovan action be the first agenda item for the next 5-plus-2 negotiations.

14. (C) A/S Fried said the U.S. was concerned about Transnistria as it affected Moldovan sovereignty and as an indicator of Russia's relations to other "frozen conflicts" within the boundaries of neighboring countries. Just as Russia expected the international community to respect its territorial integrity, Russian should respect Georgia and Moldova's territorial integrity. While Moldova might be taking a rhetorically harsh stance toward Transnistria, Moldova's views were not inconsistent with the reality of Transnistrian leader Ihor Smirnov's behavior and regime. A Transnistria solution would not be possible without Ukrainian participation and support, particularly along UKRAINE's border with Moldova/Transnistria. The U.S. was pleased that the Ukrainians had announced their intention to enforce the customs protocol with Moldova. A/S Fried said he hoped the Ukrainians would be clear and unambiguous that, while various formulae were possible, any settlement of Transnistria had to respect Moldovan integrity. While the U.S. did not expect a solution in the near term, a solution might be possible in time if UKRAINE, the U.S., and other friendly parties were consistent and patient; in the meantime, it was important to do no harm.

Belarus

15. (C) A/S Fried said Belarus' March 19 presidential election provided an opportunity for the international community to shine a spotlight on the worsening situation in Belarus. Belarusians did not deserve President Lukashenko, Fried declared, and the U.S. wanted Belarus to be a free and democratic country. The USG was working closely with the EU to develop a united and consistent approach. The U.S. and EU were cooperating to support independent media in Belarus, including the establishment of an external broadcasting network. In the meantime, no one should rule out the possibility, although admittedly remote, that opposition to Lukashenko might galvanize around the elections, as happened in UKRAINE. Even if opposition candidate Milinkevich could not win, he could establish himself as a legitimate opposition voice. Realism should not lead anyone to view Lukashenko as destiny, A/S Fried concluded.

16. (C) A/S Fried informed the Ukrainian delegation that he, together with EC Director General Robert Cooper, were hoping to arrive in Minsk January 31, with a meeting with Belarusian officials on February 1. The U.S.-EU joint mission would seek to meet with the Foreign Minister, or Lukashenko himself, to express international concern over the possible conduct of the presidential election and to warn that the U.S., EU, and other pro-democratic countries would draw conclusions from a fraudulent election, including with regard to the legitimacy of a third Lukashenko presidency. The Belarusians had reacted with nervousness to the prospective visit. A/S Fried considered the likelihood that the visit would go forward as planned was only 50-50.

17. (C) MFA Second Territorial Directorate Deputy Director Ihor Prokopchuk said UKRAINE shared the international community's concern over the deteriorating situation in Belarus. UKRAINE would continue to join EU statements (in the OSCE) on Belarus, which Prokopchuk believed enhanced the impact of the statements. UKRAINE would also continue actively participating in multilateral meetings on Belarus, such as the early December meeting in Stockholm. UKRAINE was willing to offer its services to move Belarus out of its isolation and believed that contacts with potentially dissatisfied members of the Belarusian bureaucracy were a useful tactic.

18. (C) UKRAINE had a channel to Lukashenko and was considering using it to deliver a targeted message. Such a message could stress the importance of free and fair elections or the opening of an EC regional office in Minsk. Prokopchuk said the U.S., EU, and UKRAINE also had to consider an important issue -- how they would respond "on March 20" after a free and fair presidential election had not occurred. What would be the consequences? A/S Fried agreed on the importance of the post-election response and hoped UKRAINE would participate in developing and executing the response.

19. (C) Prokopchuk noted the increasing restrictions that the Belarusian government was placing on overseas study. He proposed that donor governments consider developing a mechanism to provide funds instead for Belarusians to study in UKRAINE. Belarusian students would gain higher academic qualifications at the same time they gained exposure to UKRAINE's greater democracy. Fried said contact with civil society was an important long-term effort and agreed that Ukrainians had a unique advantage in reaching out to members of Belarus' younger generation.

Kosovo

20. (C) A/S Wayne said the current situation in Kosovo was not sustainable. NATO had intervened to stop Serbian atrocities six and a half years ago. Under the authority of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the United Nations had assumed the extraordinary obligation to determine Kosovo's future status. Kosovo's future was uncertain but would not, under any scenario, include return to Serbian control. The situation in Kosovo was significantly different from the so-called frozen conflicts in places such as Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. Kosovo was no longer under Serbian control as a result of a NATO intervention and was now under UN administration. The U.S. appreciated UKRAINE's contributions to peacekeeping forces in Kosovo.

21. (C) Noting that Ukrainian FM Tarasyuk was in Kosovo as he spoke, DFM Khandohiy said he hoped the visit would not be unduly hampered by the death of Kosovar President Ibrahim Rugova. In Pristina, Tarasyuk would visit the Ukrainian contingent of the peacekeeping forces and meet with UN officials, then continue on to Belgrade. Khandohiy said Tarasyuk's visit underscored the importance of Kosovo to the Ukrainian government. UKRAINE fully understood the need to give new impetus to settlement efforts and strongly supported UN efforts under UNSCR 1244, which provided the framework for future talks on Kosovo's status. UKRAINE stood ready to continue its contributions to stability in the Balkans generally and in Kosovo in particular. UKRAINE felt strongly that the settlement process in Kosovo should not be allowed to affect other parts of Europe by encouraging separatist movements, especially in the areas of frozen, or protracted,

conflicts. Kosovo should be treated as a unique situation with no linkages to other areas and, Khandohiy said, he hoped this point would be taken into account during negotiations on a Kosovo settlement. (Note: According to a January 25 Interfax UKRAINE report, Serbia and Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic said Tarasyuk had expressed Ukrainian support for "Serbia and Montenegro's territorial integrity in the issue of the status of Kosovo" during their meeting.)

22. (U) The delegation cleared this cable.

23. (U) Visit Embassy Kiev's classified website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/kiev.
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