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Cable title: **UKRAINE: PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO FOCUSED ON A NATO**

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TAGS: PREL PHUM ECON ENRG UP

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO FOCUSED ON A NATO
MAP, ENERGY AND BABYN YAR COMMEMORATION

REF: KIEV 3463

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

1. (C) Summary: President Yushchenko told the Ambassador that NATO membership was an internal question for the country, but that he was working with PM Yanukovich to make a good case for a MAP during his September 14 visit to Brussels. On energy, if Ukraine could liberalize and diversify the sector, it would lead to political stability and thus less opportunity for interference. Yushchenko said that he had signed a series of decrees to implement an anti-corruption program and was eager to cooperate more closely on MCC, noting that he was ready to meet again both on MCC and a proposed program of USG assistance for the reorganization of the presidential secretariat. He expressed the hope that the President or Vice-President might be able to attend the September 27 Babyn Yar commemoration; the Ambassador noted that the U.S. delegation would be led by a cabinet-level official. Yushchenko conveyed a letter addressed to President Bush regarding the fifth anniversary of September 11 (provided septel). End Summary.

2. (C) Comment. Yushchenko appeared to be in good shape physically, certainly better than he looked in mid-July in the midst of political crisis and deadlock. He was focused and engaged during the meeting, kept to the allotted time and expressed his willingness to work closely with us on all the key bilateral issues. Yushchenko was accompanied only by an interpreter to the meeting, although foreign policy advisor Tymoshenko came in and out of the room throughout. Although the Ambassador raised Mrs. Yushchenko's planned travel to the U.S. to attend Mrs. Bush's Global Literacy Conference on September 18 in New York City, Yushchenko gave no indication that he had any intention of accompanying her to UNGA or elsewhere. End Comment.

NATO - Membership is the Goal

3. (C) After accepting the September 11 commemoration

letter on behalf of the President, the Ambassador provided the President with a readout of the major messages delivered by A/S Fried (reftel) during his visit here, including on NATO membership (a decision at Ukraine's time and pace), and relations with Russia (our only concern being that improved relations did not result in less sovereignty for Ukraine). On NATO, Yushchenko told the Ambassador that he had talked to the PM last week and that they had agreed that Ukrainian membership in NATO was the only way to guarantee Ukraine's future national security. However, this was now an "internal question" and the details regarding the pace and end point of Ukraine's movement toward NATO would be a Ukrainian decision. According to Yushchenko, Ukraine will need "several years" and it would be up to him, the PM and the Speaker to make the case to the people.

4. (C) In Yushchenko's view, a NATO MAP was important, but it would take several years to achieve membership in NATO. The NATO issue had been agreed in the "universal" after hours of discussion that had ended at 5 am the day that the universal was signed. However, "we succeeded" and now "we have to implement it." Yushchenko said that the U.S. and other allies could help - especially by supporting continued public discussions, conferences, and roundtables on the issue. U.S. advisors could also help and should meet with the PM on this issue. Yushchenko acknowledged that he was pushing the idea of a letter from the Prime Minister to NATO SYG Hoop de Scheffer on Ukraine's relationship with NATO and the question of a MAP, to be delivered during the PM's September 14 visit to Brussels. Yushchenko implied (later confirmed to the Ambassador by Chief of Staff Rybachuk) that a draft of a letter had already been signed by Yushchenko and was awaiting the PM's signature. Yushchenko commented only that "we hope this will work." He said that it would be "helpful" for the U.S. and other Allies to tell us what we need to do specifically - "give me a list of 12 actions that you want us to take." (Embassy Note: Both the Embassy and NATO experts have had conversations with the Ukrainians about what they need to do next to further the relationship, and we will continue to engage. End note.)

5. (C) Yushchenko highlighted what he sees as the key problem in Ukraine with regard to NATO membership - a lack of real information. He noted that Ukrainian television was "tied into" European channels regarding NATO. And that the main effort for the government in 2007 would be to provide more information to the Ukrainian public. However, we would "all have to get involved in order to make this happen."

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Energy Policy

6. (C) Yushchenko described energy as a key issue for national security. If Ukraine could liberalize and diversify the sector, it would lead to political stability (and thus less opportunity for the Russians to intervene). For example, with gas prices going up, Ukraine could expand its nuclear energy. Ukraine had uranium mines, Yushchenko noted, and would be looking to the U.S. and Europe for cooperation in expanding generation capacity, including new power stations. (Comment: Importantly, Yushchenko this time did not mention Ukraine seeking uranium enrichment or reprocessing.)

Gas Pipeline via Ukraine?

7. (C) Yushchenko then focused on alternative energy supply arrangements, including supplying gas and oil from Azerbaijan and Central Asia via Ukraine to Europe. Yushchenko stated that Azerbaijan President Aliyev was even more interested than he in a new gas pipeline and Yushchenko described cooperation with Kazakhstan as even more promising. He noted that Energy Minister Boiko had met recently with EU energy officials looking for support on the gas pipeline.

Odesa-Brody

8. (C) Azerbaijan was an ally of Ukraine's on the Odesa-Brody pipeline, Yushchenko said. He expected Azerbaijan to be the lead supplier of crude; some could be refined in Ukraine, the rest supplied to European refineries via the Druzhba pipeline. Ukraine was willing to give Odesa-Brody concessions to make this work, but he argued a U.S. political presence was necessary as well for success. He added that Ukraine and the EU may soon establish a working group on Odesa-Brody. In addition, he noted the Kazakhs were interested in the Polish-Ukrainian consortium Sarmatia's plans to expand capacity at the oil terminal at Pivdennyi near Odesa, which feeds into Odesa-Brody. Overall, Yushchenko said, it was hard to get these Odesa-Brody projects started, but once they got going, he thought they would roll ahead quickly.

Vanco's Tender

9. (C) The Ambassador raised recent comments by GOU officials that had aroused concerns that the GOU might change course after its tender award for oil and gas exploration in the Black Sea to the U.S. company Vanco. He noted that it was preferable to allow private firms to take this sort of risk, rather than have state-owned companies attempt such exploration, as some in the GOU suggested. Yushchenko agreed, stating that since the GOU had awarded the tender, now was the time to execute it. Yushchenko offered to meet with Vanco chairman Gene Van Dyke and instructed his staff to make arrangements.

Transnistria - Smirnov's Wants a Meeting

10. (C) In response to the Ambassador's urging that Ukraine stay positively engaged on finding a resolution to the Transnistria problem, Yushchenko noted that more progress was needed on the "5 2" mechanism. The upcoming "independence referendum" was taking attention away from the proposed "election" included in the Yushchenko plan (a nationwide election to be conducted under free and fair conditions), as well as from other important issues. He noted that Transnistrian leader Smirnov had requested "another" meeting (possibly a reference to some kind of official contact with Ukrainian officials in the future).

Fighting Corruption; Support for MCC

11. (C) Yushchenko told the Ambassador that he had recently signed a series of "super-important" documents to implement a full-scale anti-corruption program. He was pleased that the MCC anti-corruption program was moving ahead and was eager to discuss further what needed to be done so that Ukraine might qualify for a full MCC compact in the future. The Ambassador reviewed the outlines of the MCC program, noting to Yushchenko that a great deal was possible to accomplish under

MCC, but that the GOU needed to first succeed in its MCC anti-corruption program. Yushchenko said that he was ready to meet on the issue.

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12. (C) When the Ambassador asked about speculation in the press about upcoming personnel changes in the Presidential Administration and the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC), Yushchenko confirmed that changes were being considered. (Embassy Note: Yushchenko gave no hint to the Ambassador about the timing of these changes and/or who and what positions might be involved. End Note.)

Babyn Yar - A High-Level U.S. Delegation?

13. (C) At the conclusion of meeting, Yushchenko urged the USG to send a high-level delegation to the September 27 commemoration ceremony for Babyn Yar. He said that it was 90 percent certain that President Putin would represent Russia, the Israeli President was confirmed, and there would be high-level representatives from the Baltic states, Romania and Germany. The Ambassador noted that the President and Vice-President would not be able to attend, but confirmed that the U.S. delegation would be led by a cabinet-level official. We hoped to have more information about the delegation in the coming days.

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