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TAGS: PREL PGOV NATO UP

SUBJECT: UKRAINE: DAS KRAMER DISCUSSES NATO/SECURITY ISSUES
IN UKRAINE

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1. (C) Summary: EUR DAS David Kramer and NSC Director Adam Sterling discussed Ukraine-NATO relations and security issues with a range of Ukrainian officials March 18-20, in addition to energy, domestic politics, Belarus, and Transnistria (septels). Presidential adviser Oleh Rybachuk described his plans to expand an informal NATO information campaign sending cultural rather than political figures to the provinces, rather than holding policy-focused roundtables of experts in Kyiv. Rybachuk and PM adviser Kostantin Gryshchenko agreed that Russia liked Ukraine weak and divided, unable to move forward on NATO. Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko stressed that NATO membership and energy security were the two requirements to safeguard Ukrainian sovereignty. Hrytsenko and PM adviser Andriy Fialko claimed Yanukovych was delivering on practical cooperation with NATO, while former FM Borys Tarasyuk and Tymoshenko bloc (BYuT) MP Hrihoriy Nemyria countered that Yanukovych and the Cabinet had not delivered on the information campaign promises made in the PM's September 14 speech at NATO. DAS Kramer stressed to all officials the importance of Ukraine naming a foreign minister within the week if there were to be any chance of a NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) Ministerial in Oslo in April (note: Arseniy Yatsenyuk was approved as FM March 21).

Carrying the info campaign forward informally

2. (SBU) Presidential adviser Rybachuk described the current state of NATO information campaign efforts. Despite what Yanukovych had said in Brussels in September and Washington in November, the PM and the Regions-led government were not prepared to talk about NATO domestically. Except for a few advisers and MPs able to engage westerners, most Regions were locked in Soviet mentalities. Close Yanukovych associate Eduard Prutnik, Head of the State Radio and TV Committee, seemed to be willing to be cooperative, even if few resources



were being made available. It was essential to have some participation by the Regions' team.

3. (SBU) Rybachuk felt that civil society, rather than the political elite, gave reason for optimism. He was focused on conducting an informal information effort on Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic choice, launched with a March 2 conference in Kyiv, using more cultural and intellectual than political figures, and focused on efforts outside Kyiv. He had solicited leading businessmen, including the country's two richest billionaires, Regions' financier Rinat Akhmetov and Kuchma son-in-law Viktor Pinchuk, for support. Even though they were more enthusiastic about EU-related efforts than NATO, they agreed to consider providing financial support for a budget for efforts in 2008. In the meantime, Rybachuk was building a network of proven NGOs and figures who could be credible in electronic media, not politicians, but activists and cultural figures like Slava Vakarchuk, the country's leading rock star, Ruslana, 2004 Eurovision winner and now an OU MP, folk rock legend Oleh Skrypka, who lived in Paris for seven years, and the boxing brothers Klitchko, who spent a decade in Germany, all of whom would be more effective than politicians in promoting western values.

The Russia factor: liking Ukraine weak and divided

4. (C) Rybachuk stressed that Russia was comfortable with a weak and divided Ukraine, since that would keep the issue of NATO membership off the table. Once public support for membership started increasing, Russia would react even more vigorously than it was now. PM adviser Gryshchenko underscored Rybachuk's assessment that Yanukovych was not doing Moscow's bidding, leading Russia to seek other political figures to front for their interests (see septel on energy issues and controversial Energy Minister Boiko). Rybachuk suggested the Russians used marginal political forces like the Communists and Progressive Socialist Natalya Vitrenko to represent Moscow's interests and to stir up trouble in Crimea. The Russian Black Sea Fleet played an important role as well, coordinating anti-NATO actions and fomenting anti-Tatar sentiments.

Hrytsenko's views: domestic reforms, external support

5. (SBU) Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko said that energy security and NATO membership were the two keys to defending Ukrainian sovereignty. Preparing for NATO membership was 90% about internal reforms, achieving western values, transparency, and standards that could provide security for

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society and ordinary citizens, not just the state.

6. (C) Hrytsenko said that the U.S. could assist the information campaign effort by supporting easy to understand success stories. Addressing melange (rocket fuel) disposal could make up to a million Ukrainians live more safely; military-industrial cooperation could provide jobs; the experience of new NATO members had more relevance in shaping perceptions in the NATO-skeptical east and south. Most importantly, however, would be a presidential visit to Ukraine, at least in 2008, with Secretaries of State and Defense before. Hrytsenko hoped that SecDef Gates could commit to attend the 2007 Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) to be held in Kyiv sometime in

October-December. Hrytsenko asked for dates that might work for SecDef Gates.

Is Yanukovich Helping or Hindering NATO aspirations?

7. (SBU) Despite the lagging information campaign effort, Hrytsenko claimed Yanukovich's CabMin had acted quickly on decisions affecting Ukrainian participation in NATO-related operations, from Operation Active Endeavor to the Kosovo mission and Ukrainian participation in the Afghanistan-ISAF force as part of a Lithuanian PRT, an assessment shared by PM adviser Andriy Fialko.

8. (SBU) Such optimism was countered at a dinner attended by Fialko as well as former FM Tarasyuk and BYuT foreign policy adviser Nemyria. Tarasyuk noted that Yanukovich had abolished the governmental coordinating committee on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration soon after returning to power. Yanukovich also had stripped information campaign budgets from two pro-NATO bodies, the MFA and Horbulin's Center for Euro-Atlantic Integration, and given it to the Ministry of Education, run by a Socialist skeptic on NATO and overseen by DPM Tabachnyk, a vocal NATO opponent. Yanukovich was just like Kuchma, claimed Tarasyuk. Kuchma had made pro-NATO declarations, but pursued an alternate reality. Nemyria recalled his late February appearance with DPM Tabachnyk on a "Freedom of Speech" talk show focused on US foreign policy and missile defense. According to Nemyria, only he and OU's Petro Poroshenko had defended the U.S. and NATO against fierce criticism from Tabachnyk, the Socialists, and Communists. In his view, DPM Azarov also was a confirmed NATO-hater.

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