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C O N F I D E N T I A L KYIV 001201

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

1. (C) Summary and Comment. The June 16-17 visit to Kyiv and Ukraine's regional capitals by NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer and the North Atlantic Council (NAC) was seen as a strong positive by the MFA and Ukrainian pro-NATO political forces. Extensive positive press coverage, the constructive and forward-leaning participation of PM Tymoshenko, the limited size and scope of protests, and the opportunity for delegation members to visit regional capitals and interact with civil society contributed to the positive assessment. The engagement by SYG de Hoop Scheffer in addressing local NATO myths (future NATO bases in Ukraine, forced participation in operations, etc) and countering Russian claims regarding negative consequences of NATO membership was much appreciated by the Ukrainian hosts. Russian saber rattling in the run-up to the visit was ultimately seen in Kyiv as a net positive, potentially driving undecided Ukrainians away from the Russian position towards a reappraisal of closer ties with NATO. Continued measured engagement by Allies and support for the evolving NATO Information Campaign should produce positive results in broadening and informing the domestic debate in the run-up to the December Ministerial; continued domestic infighting and the specter of possible early elections remain unhelpful in creating the necessary political stability to counter MAP skeptics at Brussels. End Summary and Comment.

MFA Very Pleased with Visit Outcome

2. (C) Our MFA NATO interlocutors believe the visit was extremely successful, noting especially the strong positive signals sent by PM Tymoshenko during her two meetings with the NATO delegation. PM Tymoshenko's constructive role during the NAC meeting with President Yushchenko and the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) and her strong statements during the subsequent meeting held with the Cabinet of Ministers were underlined by MFA NATO Deputy Director General Prystaiko. Prystaiko noted the PM's support of MAP was more direct and forceful than during any previous NATO exchange, especially her statements that "I signed the



MAP request letter and I stand by it," and "I want MAP in December." Tymoshenko did maintain her more nuanced position on NATO/MAP in her public statements, emphasizing the need for the coalition to work together, focusing on former PM Yanukovich's support of NATO membership while in office, and underscoring that the question of membership would be decided by referendum.

3. (C) Some attendees confided to the MFA that they had received Russian demarches in their capitals trying to derail the NAC visit, which Prystaiko described as clumsy and ultimately counterproductive. The visit sent a strong signal of support to pro-NATO forces in Ukraine, according to Prystaiko, and countered any sense that a spate of recent Russian warnings would weaken either the government's resolve to achieve MAP or NATO's continued support of Ukraine's further integration into the Euroatlantic community. The MFA believed Moscow's hard-line stance, combined with harshly anti-Ukrainian reporting in Russian media (seen in most of Ukraine) was increasingly pushing undecided Ukrainians into the pro-NATO camp.

4. (C) The MFA was also very pleased with the proactive stance taken by SYG de Hoop Scheffer, noting his strong statements regarding NATO membership strengthening Ukraine's sovereignty and his rebuttal of Russian claims that NATO membership would gut Ukraine's defense industry and lead to the imposition of a visa regime with Russia. The relatively low turnout of anti-NATO protesters and appearance of NATO supporters (primarily from the "NATO Tak" movement launched by the People's Union Our Ukraine (PUOU) party) was also viewed as a positive. The 1,000 anti-NATO protesters who attempted to disrupt the NAC visit to Dnipropetrovsk were met by 300 NATO supporters -- and the demonstrations remained relatively peaceful without injuries or arrests reported.

Germany Stands Out

5. (C) The MFA noted also the "negative" approach taken by the German PermRep during the various meetings, which was in some instances viewed as an attempt to walk back the Bucharest Communique language. The upcoming July 21 visit by Chancellor Merkel to Kyiv is viewed by the MFA as an opportunity to judge the level of resistance in Berlin to granting MAP in December. Prystaiko described the German position as "dug-in" and said that the GOU would avoid direct confrontation on the issue, while trying to engage in a conversation on specific German concerns. (Embassy note. Ambassador Taylor has discussed with DFM Khandohiy and Deputy Head of the Presidential Secretariat Chaliy the need to avoid forcing Merkel to take a public position on MAP during the visit. They agreed that this must be avoided, as her response would be negative and foreclose any chance at a positive outcome in December. End note.)

Russia Maintains the Pressure

6. (U) The NATO delegation visit was preceded on June 14 by the celebration of the 225th anniversary of Sevastopol, headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet (BSF). Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov attended and used the occasion to fire several rhetorical warning shots regarding Ukraine's NATO aspirations. He noted that trade and industrial ties between Russia and Ukraine were sure to decrease following Ukrainian NATO accession, underlining that cooperation in the defense sector would cease. He also opined that NATO was sure to force Ukraine to introduce a

visa regime for Russia, thereby "complicating family, economic, and business ties of millions of Russians having relatives in Ukraine." He added that U.S., British, and German tourists would not flock to Crimea to replace Russian visitors. The Ukrainian MFA responded in a statement that NATO and visas are unconnected issues as NATO membership, unlike EU membership, does not entail a visa regime with neighboring countries.

7. (U) Ivanov also spoke about the future of Russia's BSF base in Sevastopol, noting that "From its (Sevastopol's) founding, it was inseparably linked with the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the entire population of Russia." He also argued that the BSF defended not only Russian interests, but the southern borders of Ukraine as well. In an oblique reference to the increased focus by Kyiv on the need to withdraw the BSF by the 2017 deadline, Ivanov said that "Loud blackmail, threats, and deviousness are something that have never produced good results." Recent statements by Russian NATO Ambassador Rogozin predicting a popular uprising in Crimea if Ukraine joined NATO also received press coverage in Ukraine.

8. (U) In addition, a June 13 Russian Foreign Ministry statement on purported illegal Ukrainian oil exploration activity in the Black Sea was widely interpreted as another signal of Moscow's displeasure with Ukraine's NATO overtures. The Ukrainian MFA fired back with a statement that all exploration was taking place in areas clearly within Ukrainian territory and that claims of activity in any disputed areas were false. Former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk (current head of the Rada's European Integration Committee) presented the Russian charge as an attempt to question the existing border delineation in the Kerch strait and Sea of Azov and to signal Russia's continued intention to destabilize Ukraine.

Euro 2008 Soccer Championship's NATO Angle

9. (U) A very successful pro-NATO TV ad placement during half-time of Euro 2008 soccer games is creating a lot of buzz in Ukraine. The 30-second spots highlight details about the two contesting countries, noting especially their membership in the EU and NATO -- effectively portraying NATO as an organization of "normal, friendly, open" countries, as described by one Embassy contact. The ads also tie into the pride Ukrainians feel about hosting the upcoming 2012 championship and enhance the focus on a "Western" orientation. Mission will explore with GOU NATO Information Campaign leadership other opportunities for emphasizing focus on NATO members and sense of community this evokes in Ukrainian population.

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