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SUBJECT: UKRAINE: GOVERNMENT CONDEMNS RUSSIAN RECOGNITION OF SOUTH OSSETIA AND ABKHAZIA

REF: A. STATE 91894

B. STATE 89769

C. STATE 91908

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Taylor for reasons 1.4 (b, and d)

1. (C) Summary: The Government of Ukraine has made strong public statements condemning Russia's decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In both public statements and in meetings with the Ambassador, Democratic Coalition leaders remain committed to Euro-Atlantic collective security and to Georgia's territorial integrity while the leader of the opposition Party of Regions publicly spoke in favor of Russia's position. The Presidential Secretariat provided the Ambassador with excerpts of a letter from President Medvedev to President Yushchenko, which in strong language condemned Yushchenko's support for Georgia and his decrees regulating Russia's Black Sea Fleet. Deputy Foreign Minister Khandogiy told the Ambassador that Ukraine will continue to address the crisis in Georgia with a balanced approach to Russia, firmly asserting its security prerogatives while trying not to provoke Russia. The Ambassador delivered reftel demarches to Deputy Foreign Minister Khandogiy

MFA Strongly Condemns Russian Position  
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2. (U) On August 26, in a strongly worded statement, Ukraine's MFA stated that Russia's decision to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia was a "gross violation of the norms and principles of international law (and) bilateral and multinational treaties...." It went on to state that "the actual annexation of part of Georgia's territory through the creation of puppet regimes and support for them is evidence that the doctrine of the 'law of force' in resolving international problems is being reinvigorated in the Russian Federation." The MFA "categorically" condemned Russia's decision and called on the international community to join efforts to maintain the territorial integrity of Georgia and implementation of Russia's international obligations.



## Leaders Take Sides

3. (U) On August 27, President Yushchenko stated that Ukraine does not support Russia's decision and stressed the inviolability of the principle of territorial integrity of any country. He told the press that Ukraine regrets Russia's decision and found it unacceptable. He stated that Ukraine is ready to participate in restoring Georgia's territorial integrity and that Russia's recognition of the territories "threatens peace and stability in our region and in Europe..." Prime Minister Tymoshenko stated on August 27 that her government supports Georgia's territorial integrity and that "Georgian territory is a sacred issue both for Georgia and Ukraine", she told reporters. Vice PM Hryhoriy Nemyrya of BYuT stated August 26 that Ukraine's position on Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains unchanged. He added that "Ukraine has been supporting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This position is based on principle and is unchangeable", he said. OU-PSD faction leader Vayacheslav Krylenko told the press that Our Ukraine condemns facilitation of separatist movements and supports Georgia's territorial integrity. Speaker of the Rada Arsiniy Yatsenyuk said that the conflict in Georgia will have serious consequences for geopolitical security and that it is violation of international law. He went on to say that only the UN has the right to decide on the independence of the territories, and also noted that Kosovo's independence was far from complying with international laws.

4. (U) Leader of the Party of Regions and former Prime Minister Yanukovich told the press on August 26 that Ukraine should support the will of the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and back their independence. He stated that Russia's decision was a "logical" consequence of the West's decision to recognize Kosovo. Regions' MP Taras Chornovil took a more cautious approach telling reporters that Ukraine should follow international law when recognizing new states, the way it did with Kosovo. In the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, international laws were violated said Chornovil. He said that if Ukraine recognizes these regions, it will open itself up to problems in Crimea and Transdnistria. Serhiy Tsekov, First Deputy Speaker of Crimea's Parliament, told the press on August 26 that that he supported Russian recognition. He explained that he supports their position because of referendums in the breakaway regions indicating public support for independence and noted that the international community set an example by recognizing Kosovo as an independent state.

## Medvedev writes to Yushchenko about "Deep Resentment"

5. (C) In a meeting with Presidential Secretariat Deputy Goncharuk on August 26, the Ambassador was given an excerpt of a letter he said was from Russian President Medvedev to President Yushchenko. Goncharuk expressed shock at the tone. Post's translations of the letter's excerpt reads:

"I must frankly say that the position of the Ukrainian authorities regarding Georgia's aggression arouses deep resentment in Russia. Official Kiev has in fact taken the side of Saakashvili's criminal regime, which it actively armed during recent years, including supplies of heavy weapons. One still has to look into the role of Ukrainian military experts in training the Georgian army, and their

actions during military operations against South Ossetia.  
Attempts to hush that up will fail.

I would also like to caution you against new ill-considered actions regarding the Russian Federation's Black Sea Fleet, which we keep in our special focus. The fleet is acting in strict accordance with international agreements and directives issued by me as the Commander-in-Chief. Unqualified interference in these matters may have a negative impact on the range of Russian-Ukrainian relations."

Deputy FM tells Ambassador that Ukraine will seek a Balanced Approach  
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6. (C) On August 27, Ambassador Taylor met with Deputy Foreign Minister Khandogiy to deliver reftel demarches. When the Ambassador raised Ref A points, Kandogiy referred to the MFA's statement of August 26 condemning Russia's decision to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia noting that the Russian move was "unfortunate" but not surprising. He mentioned that the situation had changed significantly in the Caucasus because of Russia's decision. He said the MFA was reviewing steps it could take to address the situation with NATO MAP being the strongest step to improve Ukraine's security. He explained that the MFA was engaging with its partners and had noticed a possible positive shift in Germany's position toward Ukraine's desire for MAP in recent statements by Chancellor Merkel. He told the Ambassador that Ukraine was also considering a call for Russia and other signatories to observe security guarantees it made in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and that it would also look to reinforce security provisions within international organizations including the OSCE and UN as well as work to expand security cooperation through bilateral agreements.

7. (C) When asked by the Ambassador if Members of Parliament had had changed their views on Euro-Atlantic integration because of the crisis in Georgia, Khandogiy replied that little had changed in regards to the positions of the main political parties but it was still too early to be sure. He agreed that the Party of Region's statement in support of Russia's position was disappointing but hoped that Yanukovych would at least not attempt to disrupt the already tenuous unity of the ruling Rada coalition. Khandogiy agreed that the current coalition was the best option for Ukraine at the moment and that the "democratic" forces had to take the stability of the country especially seriously at this time. He opined that public opinion may have become more favorable towards the Government's pro-NATO stance because of Russia's recent actions.

8. (C) In response to the Ambassador's discussion of Ref B points, Khandogiy said that Ukraine would take a balanced approach towards Russia, firm but not overly provocative. He said a firm stance was needed because Russia has a tendency to exploit signs of weakness, but he agreed with the Ambassador that unnecessarily provoking Russia was not in Ukraine's best interest. He explained that Ukraine's intent to join NATO and recent presidential decrees to regulate movement of Russia's Black Sea Fleet based in Ukraine were legitimate policies to promote Ukraine's security, and not intended to antagonize anyone. He mentioned President Medvedev's recent letter to President Yushchenko noting that the Russians sometimes take on an arrogant tone and seem to forget that the agreements on the basing of the Black Sea Fleet include respect for Ukrainian law. He said that Ukraine was considering a call to change the format of the peacekeeping force in Georgia with the UN General Assembly, noting that its mandate will be extended on October 15.

9. (C) When asked about Serbia's proposal to refer Kosovo's declaration of independence to the International Court of Justice (Ref C), Khandogiy replied that he would have to study the issue before he could provide Ukraine's position on the issue. Khandogiy confirmed that the GoU was still considering its position on Kosovo independence and mentioned a strong legal argument would have to be made to clearly separate the issue of Kosovo independence and the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Ambassador reiterated the USG position on the legality of Kosovo's independence.

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