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C O N F I D E N T I A L KYIV 001968

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/06/2017

TAGS: PGOV PHUM UP

SUBJECT: ICRC RECONSIDERS DECISION TO CLOSE DELEGATION IN  
KYIV

REF: KYIV 1553

Classified By: Charge James Pettit for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: Representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) told us that it was reconsidering its plan to close the ICRC delegation in Kyiv (Reftel) and said that they perceived a high level of tension among the ethnic Russian, Crimean Tatar, and Ukrainian communities during their recent visit to Crimea. They said the ICRC would consider whether recent developments in Georgia and ongoing domestic political uncertainty warrant continuation of its mission in Kyiv with a focus on conflict resolution activities in Crimea. End Summary.

2. (C) On September 30, the ICRC's Head of Operations in Eastern Europe, Pascale Meige-Wagner, and the head of the ICRC Regional Delegation for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, Jean-Jacques Bovay, told the Charge that the ICRC was reconsidering its decision to close its delegation in Kyiv (Reftel). They explained that because of the recent conflict in Georgia and uncertainty about the Ukrainian domestic political scene, Pascale had traveled from Geneva to determine if the ICRC should remain in Kyiv to support humanitarian assistance in the event of conflict in the region and implement conflict resolution efforts in Crimea.

3. (C) Pascale and Bovay described their recent travel to Crimea where they met with representatives from the ethnic Russian, Crimean Tatar, and Ukrainian communities to assess the potential for interethnic conflict and the level of support among ethnic Russians for closer political ties with Russia. They concluded that there is little trust and dialogue among Crimea's ethnic communities. They came away from their meetings with a sense that ethnic Russians felt relatively secure because of Crimea's autonomous status and what they perceive as the stabilizing influence of the Black Sea Fleet. However, Pascale remained concerned that issues such as mandatory Ukrainian language in schools and public institutions, accession to NATO, and the departure of the Black Sea Fleet could inflame latent separatist sentiments among the ethnic Russian community. Crimean Tatar community leaders told the ICRC delegation that, although they continued to support the central government, there was a



sense of disappointment with what they see as Kyiv's inadequate response to long standing issues such as land restitution and discrimination. The Crimean Tatars told the ICRC that they would avoid provoking confrontation with their neighbors and were prepared to rely on themselves if the central government did not support them, without providing further details on their self-reliance to the ICRC.

4. (C) Pascale explained that the ICRC would consider whether the situation in Crimea, in the wake of the Russia-Georgia conflict, and recent developments requires the ICRC to continue its mission in Ukraine. If the ICRC does stay, its primary focus would be on humanitarian support in conflicts and assistance with conflict resolution. ICRC still plans to hand over responsibility for its current international humanitarian law programs with Ukraine's law enforcement agencies and military to the GoU and run its other activities from the Moscow delegation. ICRC's support for the Ukrainian Red Cross Society would continue at slightly higher levels regardless if the ICRC leaves Kyiv.

5. (C) Comment: Although the ICRC was not clear on what plans it has for conflict resolution activities, its assistance has the potential to be helpful in reducing tension among Crimea's ethnic communities.  
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