

Identifier	Created	Classification	Origin
08KYIV2243	2008-11-13 15:00:00	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Kyiv

Cable title: **ANTI-XENOPHOBIA UNIT: OFF TO A SLOW START**

Tags: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOC](#) [UP](#)



[how-to read a cable](#)

[Show metadata](#)

CONFIDENTIAL KYIV 002243

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2018

TAGS: PGOV PHUM SOC UP

SUBJECT: ANTI-XENOPHOBIA UNIT: OFF TO A SLOW START

Classified By: Political Counselor Colin Cleary for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

1. (C) The Security Service of Ukraine's (SBU) Department to Combat Xenophobia has been in operation for about a year, investigating 120 cases. Officials highlighted the achievement of three criminal convictions (for inciting ethnic hatred) during that time. Extremist groups have contributed to an increase of hate crimes during the past two years. However, The Deputy Head of the department dismissed some incidents against minorities as mere "hooliganism" and not racially-motivated. The department appears under-funded and off to a somewhat slow start. End Summary.

First Anniversary

2. (C) On November 6, the Embassy's Regional Affairs Officer, Legal Attache, Regional Security Officer, and Human Rights Officer met with the Yaroslav Savchin, deputy chief of the SBU's Department to Combat Xenophobia, to learn more about the department's organization and activities. The department was established by order of President Yushchenko in October 2007 after a series of highly publicized violent anti-Semitic incidents. Savchin explained that the department's two main tasks were to investigate manifestations of xenophobia and violations of Article 161 of Ukraine's Criminal Code, which makes inciting ethnic hatred a criminal offense. He confirmed that the department was established in response to the increase in incidents over the past two years involving people of Jewish, African, and Middle Eastern descent. He said that since its inception, the unit has investigated 120 incidents, which fit into three general categories: hooliganism, vandalism and physical attacks; damage to buildings owned by religious groups and NGOs; and destruction to cemeteries and cultural monuments. He contended that the number of such incidents in Ukraine was low in comparison with its neighbors.

Extremist Groups



3. (C) Savchin explained that perpetrators of racially motivated incidents tended to be from extremist groups, including: skinheads, the Ukrainian National Labor Party,

Group 82, Patriot of Ukraine, and Svoboda (Freedom). He added that many of the neo-Nazi and skinhead groups have connections to groups in Europe and the U.S. The SBU's department has its headquarters in Kyiv and a network of regional offices, he explained. The department's main areas of responsibility included preventive measures, investigative assistance to the Prosecutor General's Office and Ministry of Interior, and efforts to reduce the overall trend of hate crimes.

SBU Monitors University-Based Anti-Semitism

4. (C) Savchin noted that the SBU regularly investigates the activities of the Inter-regional Academy for Personnel Management (MAUP), Ukraine's largest commuter university and purveyor of roughly 90 percent of Ukraine's anti-Semitic publications. He noted the number of cases involving manifestations of anti-Semitism involving MAUP (primarily publications and academic conferences) had dropped significantly during 2008. He mentioned that the SBU had forwarded recommendations to the Ministry of Justice to improve the effectiveness of Article 161 of the Criminal Code, which makes inciting racial hatred a criminal offense. He added that it was under review by the ministry and unlikely to be reviewed by the Rada anytime soon.

Hate Crime Convictions

5. (C) Savchin highlighted three cases that his department was involved in which led to convictions under Article 161. These cases were: vandalism of a monument to the Holocaust and a Jewish cemetery in Odesa in March 2007; the publication of an inflammatory article by the editor of an Odesa newspaper in 2008; and distribution of anti-Semitic leaflets in Odesa in December 2007. He added that his department had helped to ban U.S. white supremacist David Duke from entering Ukraine, after he visited the country several times to appear as guest speaker at events hosted by MAUP. He said that the SBU was continuing to monitor hate crimes and had met with representatives of international human rights NGOs such as Amnesty International and representatives from the German and Israeli diplomatic missions in Ukraine. He also expressed interest in exchanging experience with U.S. law enforcement in combating hate crimes.

"Hooliganism"

6. (C) Savchin explained that cooperation between the SBU and the Ministry of Interior, while poor, had been improving over the past several months. When asked about the increase in attacks against minorities, Savchin stated that the increase was, in part, the result of the growing presence of migrants in Ukraine. However, many recent incidents were acts of "hooliganism" -- disorderly conduct -- and not racially motivated. When asked about public outreach efforts to highlight and prevent the problem of xenophobia, Savchin said that the SBU did not have a budget for public outreach but that it does address the issue during its daily activities and made efforts to highlight cases with the media. When asked how many people worked in the department's main office in Kyiv and regional representation, Savchin

evasively replied "enough."

Comment

7. (C) The SBU's establishment of the department was a step forward -- although it took them a year from issuance of the Presidential decree ordering the department's creation to get it up and running. We came away from the meeting with Savchin with a sense that the department was a relatively low priority for the SBU and short on resources. Savchin was knowledgeable about the problem of racially motivated violence and hate groups. However, his comment that violent incidents against minorities and foreigners were often isolated acts of hooliganism and not racially motivated struck us as overly sweeping. While doing some useful work, the department has gotten off to a modest start. We will continue to track its evolution.

TAYLOR

Website pages

