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Cable title: **UKRAINE'S SKINHEAD SUBCULTURE**

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SUBJECT: UKRAINE'S SKINHEAD SUBCULTURE

REF: A. KYIV 2243

B. KYIV 2262

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.
Not for Internet.

Summary

1. (SBU) Ukrainian skinheads congregate in small and poorly organized groups in a number of larger cities. They tend to be divided on thematic lines, such as neo-Nazis, anti-fascists, and football hooligans. Some are involved in hate crimes and have links with skinheads abroad, particularly Russia. Estimates the number of skinheads in Ukraine vary; there may be about 500 hard-core skinheads as well as a few thousand followers. End Summary.

Skinheads of various stripes

2. (U) According to press statements by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), skinhead organizations exist in the cities of Kyiv, Sevastopol, and Yalta. They also are present in a number of oblasts including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Sumy, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Vinnytsia, Odesa, and Zhytomyr. In Kyiv, rock groups such as Perun's Axe and Dozer-88 attract skinheads with violent and anti-social music. The unregistered Ukrainian National-Labor Party, Blood and Honor Ukraine, the Ukrainian Movement Against Illegal Immigration, and the Sevastopol Movement Against Illegal Immigrants have a following among neo-Nazi skinheads.

3. (SBU) Anti-fascist groups include Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP) and the Red and Anarchist Skinheads (RASH). Supporters of soccer teams, so called football hooligans, are also part of this violent subculture. In a meeting with Emboffs, the SBU's Department to Combat Xenophobia confirmed that the perpetrators of violent hate crimes tended to be from extremist groups, including



skinheads. He noted that some the neo-Nazi and skinhead groups have connections to groups in Europe and the U.S. (ref A).

Numbers Hard to Estimate

4. (SBU) Vyacheslav Likhachev, an expert on skinheads in Ukraine, told EmbOff that skinheads here are poorly organized and loosely affiliated with better established ultranationalist organizations such as Patriot of Ukraine and the Ukrainian National-Labor Party. Because of their fragmented organizational structure, Likhachev explained that

reliable estimates of their numbers are hard to come by. The Ministry of Interior has estimated that there are five hundred skinheads in the entire country, while independent experts asserted that there are five hundred in Kyiv alone. The SBU estimated roughly one hundred active and aggressive skinheads in Kyiv.

Expert Estimates 500 Hard Core, 2000-3000 Followers

5. (SBU) Likhachev believes that there are roughly 500 hard core skinhead "organizers" in Ukraine with 2000-3000 less committed followers on the periphery. The followers attend demonstrations and concerts and stay in contact with the organizers via the internet. Likhachev, who concurs with the SBU estimate of 100 violent skinheads in Kyiv, believes that groups of 5-8 individuals are responsible for many of the racially motivated attacks in the city over the past two years. He believes that a crackdown by police in the past few months, including confinement of some group leaders, has forced the organizers to lower their profile and scared away the less committed followers. (ref B).

Russian Skinheads

6. (SBU) Likhachev explained that German and Polish radical groups influenced Ukrainian skinheads during the 1990s. However, Russian skinheads have gained influence during the past six years - even in the western Ukraine, where anti-Russian sentiments are stronger. He cited police statistics showing that one third of skinheads arrested in Ukraine were actually Russian nationals. He attributed the nexus of Russian and Ukrainian skinhead movements to common cultural, linguistic, and historical ties. There is frequent contact between Ukrainian and Russian skinheads including attendance of demonstrations and concerts in their respective countries according to Likhachev. He doubted there was much

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Russian funding for Ukrainian skinheads or ultranationalist groups except for pro-Russian "Cossack" groups in Crimea.

MOI Human Rights Monitor Wants Special Hate Crimes Unit

7. (SBU) The head of the recently established MOI Human Rights Monitoring Department, Oleg Martynenko, confirmed that extremist groups and skinheads are a contributing factor to xenophobia and hate crimes. He told Emboff that although the MOI has a unit to combat crimes involving foreigners, he felt that the MOI should consider establishing a special hate crimes unit. The problem, he felt, is that the existing unit

investigates crimes committed by foreigners as well as crimes against foreigners. This unit is understaffed and cannot devote enough resources to investigating crimes against foreigners, who frequently are the victims of violent hate crimes. If established, a special hate crimes unit would focus on racially motivated crimes and hate groups.

Comment

8. (SBU) Ukraine's skinhead movement appears to be marginal and poorly organized. However, they present a danger to society given the involvement of some skinheads in hate crimes. As economic conditions worsen over the next year, more disaffected youth may be attracted by the skinheads' anti-social message.

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