

Jamestown Foundation blog

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[Russians Control Yanukovych](#)



By Taras Kuzio

Imagine the Washington Post revealing the sensational news that the head of the Security Service detail guarding the newly elected US president is a Canadian or Mexican citizen. The ensuing scandal would be most likely grounds for impeachment. After all, the head of the presidential bodyguard would have access to every state secret coming through the hands of the US president and would be in a position to overhear most conversations as well as observe the president's private life.

The files that such an intelligence officer would collect over the course of a five year presidential term would be a KGB (and FSB) officer's dream. No foreign official would wish to reveal anything significant, out of fear it would slip back to Ottawa or Mexico city.

This is, however, the realm of fantasy. Now enter the real world of Ukrainian politics. On October 6, Ukrayinska Pravda [revealed a real life scandal](#): the head of President Viktor Yanukovych's presidential guard, Viacheslav Zanevskyi, is a Russian citizen. His photograph is revealed in the report and he is shown accompanying Yanukovych on the president's visit to France ([see Zanevskyi in the fifth photograph](#)).

Russian citizen Zanevskyi's unofficial title is "Head of the personal guard of the President". "This is the ear and eyes who sees everything and hears everything," Ukrayinska Pravda [author Serhiy Leshchenko wrote](#).

Zanevskyi was hired as the head of Yanukovych's guard in the summer of 2008 because the president did not trust the Security Service (SBU) or the Directorate on State Protection [UDO], the former ninth directorate of the Soviet KGB. This is an outcome of Yanukovych's pathological fear of being attacked or even assassinated (see "Assassination Phobia Spreads in Ukraine," EDM, June 28).

It is also a product of Yanukovich's close relationship with Russia, which supported Yanukovich overtly and covertly during the widespread 2004 election fraud. The Party of Regions, then led by Yanukovich, and Unified Russia parties signed a cooperation agreement in 2005. Russian political technologists with close ties to the Kremlin, such as Gleb Pavlovsky, worked illegally on Yanukovich's 2004 campaign.

Zanevskyi accompanied Yanukovich throughout the 2010 elections, surprisingly without a peep of discontent from the UDO. Since Yanukovich's election, Zanevskyi's position has become a question of national security, and his continued presence as the head of the presidential guard is illegal. This was the reason, Ukrayinska Pravda noted, why Zanevskyi was officially appointed a "non-resident presidential adviser".

The question, Ukrayinska Pravda asked, is who then is paying Zanevskyi's salary and expenses? These cannot come from the state budget because he is a "non-resident" (i.e. not legally on the state payroll).

Zanevskyi remains a senior instructor in the [Russian Academy of Bodyguards](#). His earlier clients were the secretary of Russia's National Security Council, Oleksandr Lebed, and Russian oligarchs.

Zanevskyi is a frequent contributor to the Russian Academy of Bodyguards' internet forum, where he presents himself nonchalantly as the "head of the personal guard of the president" (not as a "non-resident presidential adviser"). On the Russian Academy of Bodyguards Forum, Zanevskyi discusses the "correct" course of foreign policy that Ukraine should follow - which of course is "non-bloc" and does not include NATO membership.

Ukrayina moloda, drawing on inside sources, [revealed](#) that Zanevskyi has a Ukrainian diplomatic foreign service passport. Ukraine does not recognize dual citizenship.

Ukraine, of course, is not the US. The scandal and impeachment that would have happened in Washington will never happen in Kyiv. Yanukovich and the presidential administration have ignored the scandal and have not commented on it.

The only possible conclusion is that Russia makes demands to Yanukovich that, in return for political and financial support, it will obtain influence over cabinet appointments in the security forces and education. While SBU chairman Valeriy Khoroshkovsky is busy searching for Western spies, he is ignoring, or helping to facilitate, Zanevskyi's transfer of state secrets to Russia.

Posted by Jamestown Foundation at [7:21 AM](#) 