

# Paranoia Grows In the Yanukovych Regime

Publication: Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 8 Issue: 214

November 18, 2011 05:08 PM Age: 1 hrs

By: [Taras Kuzio](#)



On November 2, President Viktor Yanukovych made a startling warning at an enlarged government meeting. He said “Law enforcement organs have told me there are purchases of weapons in preparation for a violent attack on the organs of the ruling bodies (of the state),” adding “People have lost their fear and conscience. Who is organizing this?” (Ukrayinska Pravda, November 2).

An anonymous Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) officer told Segodnya on November 3, a newspaper owned by Donetsk oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, that there have been cases of weapons being purchased in Lviv, Kharkiv and other cities. He confirmed that the SBU had “operational information” about increased threats to Ukraine’s leaders. “These are not rumors from the bazaar. These are facts from trusted people,” the SBU officer said. This was the reason, he confirmed, for increasing presidential security and that of other senior state officials. Yanukovych’s cortege to Chernivtsi included 30 vehicles, only 15 less than the level of protection for the US president (see video on Ukrayinska Pravda, November 9).

In September, the Party of Regions began drawing up a draft law to combat “extremism,” as seen in Russia and the CIS. “Extremism” is defined as the “forcible seizure of power,” “intrusion into the work of the authorities” and “hindering the work of the authorities.” If the law had existed in 2004, Orange Revolution protestors, who blocked the government and presidential administration buildings, could have been criminally charged. The Yanukovych administration is paranoid about threats and “sees imagined enemies much like other strongman leaders in Russia and Belarus” (Kyiv Post, November 3). In response to criticism of democratic backsliding Ukrainian leaders, according to one editorial, “have adopted increasingly aggressive rhetoric against both Western and domestic critics” (Kyiv Post, November 3).

The Yanukovych administration’s criticism against its domestic opponents equates their protest to undermining political stability with the help of foreign support. Cables from the US embassy in Kyiv, released by WikiLeaks, show on a number of occasions Yanukovych’s “Maidanophobia” (Korrespondent, November 7). The maidan is blocked each weekend by musical performances organized by the authorities fearing it could be taken over by the opposition.

Yanukovych has always believed the Orange Revolution, and similar democratic uprisings in Serbia, Georgia, and the Arab world, are products of foreign conspiracies. In November 2006, Prime Minister Yanukovych told US Ambassador William Taylor that President Viktor “Yushchenko is obligated to the Americans for his position.” Taylor replied that his was “nonsense” (<http://www.wikileaks.org/cable/2006/11/06KYIV4187.html>).

The 2004 Yanukovich election campaign unleashed a massive anti-American campaign against Yushchenko (see EDM, October 7, 2004). At that time, Ukraine had the third largest military contingent in Iraq and unsuccessfully sought a Membership Action Plan at NATO's June 2004 Istanbul summit.

A Korrespondent blogger noted on November 7 that paranoia makes it impossible to explain the policies and actions of the Yanukovich administration in "rationale terms." Paranoia is driven by Yanukovich's fears, as in the case of the imprisoning of Yulia Tymoshenko, which has brought them no dividends and is "irrational" (see EDM, November 4).

On the other hand, Tymoshenko's imprisonment is "rational" when the country is completely controlled by one person, Yanukovich, who has concentrated power entirely in his hands. Rational or not, Yanukovich feels threatened by Tymoshenko who, if released, would organize an "Orange Revolution-2" against him. Yanukovich's neo-Soviet political culture "does not view the right of the people to undertake protest actions and sees enemies behind everything" (Ukrayinska Pravda, November 3). There is no room for "maidan's in this mindset. Yanukovich told the government meeting, "normal people sit and are patient."

If, instead, they storm the barricades they are "unhinged," like Tymoshenko, or financed by the CIA and high on oranges injected by the CIA with narcotics. In the Orange Revolution, Lyudmila Yanukovich said at one of her husband's rallies that the CIA had imported drugged oranges for protestors so they would stay in tents on the maidan (see video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtS2xb8EFD4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtS2xb8EFD4)). Since Yanukovich was elected, Lyudmila Yanukovich has been kept out of public sight in Donetsk.

The head of the Association of Owners of Arms, which believes there are 2 million legal holders of weapons in Ukraine, told Kommersant-Ukrainy (November 4) that the president's paranoia "smells of 1937." Anatoliy Grytsenko, the head of the parliamentary committee on national security and defense, is concerned that Yanukovich's paranoia signifies a shift in the authorities' threat perceptions from external to internal. Of Ukraine's 715,000 security forces only 184,000 are military personnel.

Front for Change leader, Arseniy Yatseniuk pointed out that corrupt interior ministry officers are the major source of illegal weapons. He added "every Ukrainian has a weapon as there is a pitchfork in every decent home" (Ukrayinska Pravda, November 3). Paranoia is stoked up by the president's oligarchic allies and security forces to make him dependent upon them. Yanukovich's bodyguard is a Russian citizen and his security establishment was successfully lobbied by Russia (EDM, March 29, 2010, Jamestown blog, October 13, 28, 2010).

Arms were planted on Svoboda (Freedom) and Tryzub (Trident) nationalists who were arrested in January 2011, after the Jozef Stalin monument was blown up in Zaporizhzhia. In August, the leaders of the marginal nationalist group, Patriots of Ukraine, were interrogated after the SBU revealed plans for a terrorist attack on August 24, Ukraine's Independence Day.

Ahead of the soccer Euro-2012 championship, another threat is politicized football fans. A senior interior ministry officer revealed to Ukrayinsky Tyzhden on November 4 that instructions had been sent from the presidential administration to repress fanatical football supporters. These instructions were issued after the August 7 soccer match between Kyiv Dynamo and Lviv Karpaty, where supporters of both clubs chanted "Thank you Donbas for a Faggot President" ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0IqcXwpZpY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0IqcXwpZpY)). A print shop producing tee-shirts with the lyric was closed and its owner has fled abroad.

A Peoples Council was established by radical social, veterans and business NGO's on November 5, with the objective of overthrowing Yanukovich. Chernobyl and Afghanistan veterans have twice almost stormed parliament, in the second incident breaking newly erected metal fences. The Peoples Council will have limited influence because of widespread disillusionment in opposition politicians. "Today the political opposition is completely unable to do anything," Volodymyr Fesenko, the head of the Penta think tank, said. He pointed to low numbers of protestors in Ukraine compared to those in Greece and elsewhere in Europe.

The president's paranoia will have two outcomes. First, it reduces the chances of Tymoshenko's release. Second, it is likely to stoke further political repression, especially ahead of the 2015 presidential election, when Yanukovich will campaign for re-election. In such an environment of paranoia, exaggerated threats and personal insecurity, it will be virtually impossible to hold free elections in 2012 and 2015.