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Putin Aide Warns U.S. on Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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A senior Kremlin aide accused the U.S. on Thursday of arming Ukrainian "rebels" and, urging the Kiev government to put down what it called an attempted coup, warning it could intervene to maintain the security of its ex-Soviet neighbor.

Sergei Glazyev, an adviser to President Vladimir Putin with responsibility for relations with Ukraine, told a newspaper that U.S. "interference" breached the 1994 treaty under which Washington and Moscow jointly guaranteed Ukraine's security and sovereignty after Kiev gave up its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal.

His characteristically confrontational comments, on the eve of an expected meeting between Putin and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych at the opening of the Sochi Winter Olympics, could add to tensions with Washington, and within Ukraine.

Asked by Kommersant Ukraine whether Russia might "actively intervene" if the country's crisis deepened, Glazyev recalled the Budapest Memorandum of 1994: "Under the document, Russia and the U.S. are guarantors of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and ...

are obliged to intervene when conflict situations of this nature arise."

"And what the Americans are getting up to now, unilaterally and crudely interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs, is a clear breach of that treaty. The agreement is for collective guarantees and collective action."

He did not specify what action Russia might take.

Washington, which has urged Yanukovych to share power with a unity government to end a violent standoff in the streets, has accused Russia of pressuring the leadership in Kiev to prevent Ukraine joining a trade pact with the European Union.

Yanukovych sparked the protests in November when he turned down the EU accord and took financial aid instead from Moscow.

Glazyev, who was prominent in a Kremlin campaign last year that threatened economic sanctions against Ukraine if it took the EU deal, accused U.S. agents of giving "$20 million a week" for arms and other help to "the opposition and rebels" in Kiev.

"There is information that within the grounds of the U.S. Embassy, there is training for fighters, that they are arming them," Glazyev said. The U.S. Embassy declined comment.

The Kremlin official suggested Yanukovych should use force if necessary to put an end to a protest movement that Glazyev called "an attempt at a coup d'etat, and the violent overthrow of authority" in which public buildings had been occupied.

"The authorities are not fulfilling their duty to defend the state, negotiating with putschists as if they are law-abiding citizens," he said, accusing the West of "blackmailing" Yanukovych and wealthy oligarchs by threatening to seize their extensive foreign assets and blacklist them from traveling.

He said Yanukovych had done all he could to avoid violence, in contrast to the opposition, and accused leaders in the Ukrainian-speaking west of the country of being "separatists."

Russia, he said, was concerned that the country should not split apart. But he suggested that a form of federalism be introduced to give regions substantial powers — including over their budgets and even over international relations.

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