

Ukraine: Political Crisis Will Not Derail 2022 Bid

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 09, 2014

The  Moscow Times

With the political crisis at home showing no signs of abating, Ukrainian officials insisted Sunday that their bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics will not be derailed — and will help unite the country.

The Ukrainian city of Lviv is one of five contenders for the 2022 Games. Bid officials held a news conference in Sochi to promote their case but were repeatedly questioned about the anti-government demonstrations that have gripped the country for months.

"The Olympics are above any politics," Acting Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Vilkul said. "Ukraine will resolve all its political problems and issues and will come out stronger and together."

With the International Olympic Committee to select a short list of finalists in July, Ukraine is under pressure to overcome its problems quickly to have any hope of making the cut.

An announcement from Ukraine's national security service on Sunday that the country was on high alert following reports of planned explosions was unlikely to help the bid, however.

A warning was issued concerning high-risk facilities across Ukraine, including nuclear and hydro power plants, international airports, railway stations and bus stations, cross-country pipelines and weapons storage facilities.

These measures have been made public and aim at preventing threats to the life and health of Ukrainians, the Ukrainian security service, the SBU, said in a statement on its website. The service also confirmed a hijack attempt on a plane en route to Turkey from Kharkiv on Feb. 7.

A passenger aboard a Pegasus Airlines flight attempted to hijack the plane by claiming there was a bomb aboard and demanded to go to the Olympic city of Sochi, officials and media reports said. The flight landed safely in Istanbul, its original destination, despite the ordeal.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said three people were injured Saturday in downtown Kiev, the scene of mass anti-government protests since November. One person was reportedly hit by a guard, while two others were attacked by unknown assailants in separate incidents.

The city saw worse clashes between rioters and police for several days last month following the hasty passage of draconian laws that strictly curbed the right to protest. Those laws were later repealed.

Material from RIA Novosti is included in this report.

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