

Ukraine MPs call for treason charges against pro-Russian MP

Ukraine

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Analyst: Murayev's provocative comments merely add to the destabilizing factors, though we don't expect him to be prosecuted because he is too useful politically for the Poroshenko administration.

KYIV, June 11, 2019 - Two Ukrainian parliamentary factions called on June 8 for treason charges to be filed against MP Yevgeny Murayev [pictured] for provocative comments regarding political prisoner Oleg Sentsov that repeat the Kremlin position. The prior day, Murayev told a local television network, "From the point of view that this person prepared arson and explosions, for one part of the population he is a terrorist and for the nationalist part he is a hero." He added, "Time will tell." In referring to Sentsov as a criminal, Murayev was repeating Russian propaganda about the Crimean pro-Ukrainian film director, said MP Serhiy Pashynskiy of the People's Front party, which joined the Poroshenko Bloc in calling for criminal charges to be filed by the Security Service (for state treason) and the Prosecutor General of Ukraine (for a slanderous statement about alleged crime). Pashynskiy called for forbidding Murayev into the parliamentary session hall until he issues a formal apology. In response to the criticism, Murayev said his comments didn't reflect his personal position, rather "we were examining the overall political situation, how the government is acting." He insisted his statements didn't violate any laws. Murayev is the head of the political council of the For Life party [the party leader is [Vadym Rabinovych](#)] which has a Russian orientation. Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: "Murayev has emerged as the leading Russophile voice in Ukrainian politics, making provocative statements that parrot the Kremlin position. The outrageousness of his statements make him the ideal political punching bag for all of Ukraine's pro-Western politicians, particularly President Poroshenko, who is looking for a potential second-round sparring partner in the March 2019 presidential elections. The rash and brazen Murayev, 41, would fit this role very well. "However, Murayev is not nearly as popular at this moment as Ukraine's other Russian-leaning leader, Yuriy Boyko, the head of the Opposition Bloc. It's Boyko — the experienced political insider (59 years old) who is far more careful with his words - who poses the real threat to Ukrainian statehood. Although the Presidential Administration might try to elevate Murayev above Boyko, we don't see likely success, particularly when Boyko has far more resources, including the Kremlin's backing. "The presence of both Boyko and Murayev on the political scene also reveals just how fragile Ukraine's democracy is in a time of Russian military aggression. Numerous political observers are concerned about whether Ukrainian statehood will survive the 2019 elections at all, considering how little trust the public has in the process and how much the Kremlin will try to undermine it. Murayev's provocative comments merely add to the destabilizing factors, though we don't expect him to be prosecuted because he is too useful politically for the Poroshenko administration."

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