



Tuesday 5 November 1991

Ukraine sets up National Guard

KIEV — Ukraine's National Guard and Border Guard will celebrate 4 November as their founding day. While the 420,000-strong Ukrainian army still only exists on paper, the Ukrainian Parliament yesterday voted 6,000 troops into a National Guard to start work immediately, writes Susan Viets.

Troops will be drawn from Ukrainian Ministry of Interior divisions. By April, 30,000 will have joined the Guard which is controlled by the Ukrainian Parliament. The Guard's hardware will come from the Ministry of the Interior. While they will train in uniforms of the Soviet Army, troops will be set apart by a white puma badge with a blue and yellow background, the national colours.

Parliament also voted yesterday that by 1 February 1992 Ukraine must have a preliminary agreement with neighbouring republics on the legal definition of state borders. The Border Guard may be stationed on inter-republican boundaries. The law states: "In the border zone... Ukraine's Border Guard has the right to set up posts it needs in order to carry out its functions."

While the number is not yet decided, Ukrainian Border Guards will prevent unlawful border crossings, and military formations from entering Ukraine, and will ensure the implementation of international border agreements.

While the new military laws take Ukraine a significant step further down the road to independence, the republic is now sending out conciliatory signals that it appears set to join the new economic union treaty. Volodymyr Gryniow, the deputy Parliamentary chairman, said yesterday: "This economic treaty will probably be signed in the next few days."

Opposition MPs challenging the right of the parliamentary chairman, Leonid Kravchuk, to sign the treaty, burst into Mr Gryniow's office demanding an explanation. "Signing an economic agreement will not stabilise the situation; the break-up of the former Soviet Union will continue," said Volodymyr Filenko, a leader of the Party for Democratic Renewal.

Mr Gryniow said the majority of Ukrainians favoured economic union but that the linchpin for it, monetary union, is now impossible. A blueprint is already being drafted in Kiev for the creation of an international clearing system. "Today we need to ensure normal trade relations between Ukraine and east European countries and also with countries of the USSR when separate national currencies are introduced," he said.

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