

Press conference of Arsen Avakov, February 26, 2014

Arsen Avakov:

Good afternoon!

I am glad to see all of you here. The key issue of our briefing is that I want to inform you that yesterday I have signed a decree number 144 on liquidation of the special public security police units “Berkut”. I have signed this decree being aware that these special public security police units discredited themselves in front of Ukrainian people. The employees of “Berkut” are immediately placed under orders of the HR Office. The heads of regional administrations are instructed to begin the certification of all the personnel of “Berkut” immediately in order to decide on their future service in the law enforcement bodies. On the basis of results of the certification and internal investigations, we will decide who is ready and who is not ready to serve in the lines of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the side of the people. The perpetrators will be punished. And those, who were not involved in the shootings and torture of civilians, will be able to work in the law enforcement bodies, in the system. [...] I think that every employee of “Berkut” has an explanation on what is happening at the moment. That is about 4,000 employees and we will continue to take actions in this direction. The certification will be terminated within 10-15 days. This is all for the current subject.

So. The following question. I would like to make a non-previewed advertisement. We have news. You are well aware of all the resonance crimes that occurred here for the last 3 months, including murder, including kidnapping and one of the most high-profile cases was the case of abduction of Yuri Lutsenko and a murder of Yuri Verbitsky. Today, I can tell you that the Central Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior is practically today held the first arrest. Main organizers and perpetrators of the offences in question are arrested. In the interests of the investigation, I cannot speak about this, I cannot give the names or details of the investigation so far, but I can say that the main perpetrators were detained. The key perpetrator is a person previously convicted, born in 1976. In the past, he was a sportsman, in fact, he is a repeat offender (recidivist). And, it is certain that he did not acted alone, but in connection with a number of structures that have been associated with the political leadership and the leadership of the previous government law enforcement bodies. That is probably all that I wanted to tell you today as to these subjects.

The following information. I would like to introduce you the new head of the Ministry of Interior, the First Deputy Minister, Mykola Velychkovych. Mykola Velychkovych held a position of the First Deputy of Samooborona Maidana and an assistant of Andriy Parubiy a few days ago.

In addition, I would like to emphasize that the process of personnel reform continues non-stop. [...] First, the First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Interior, Lieutenant general Ratushnyak requested to discharge him and I have accepted this request. [...] Moreover, I have signed a number of decrees relating to discharge from the Ministry of Interior, as to dismissal of the Lieutenant general of the Militsiya Krykun Aleksiy Alekseyevich, the head of the Department of the Public Security, Lieutenant general of the Militsiya Repin Gennady Yuriyovich, the head of the Department of Investigation and Technical Measures. In addition, the head of the Department of the State Auto Inspection Ostapkovich Volodymyr Ivanovych. [...]

Question:

[...]

There is information that some of the employees of the “Berkut” have escaped ...

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

[...]

With regard to the situation of employees of the “Berkut”, which have left the location of its divisions, yes, indeed, we have this situation now. The internal investigation is in process. We conduct an inventory of special equipment and the availability of personal composition everywhere. As a rule, the location of the division left the people who realize that they will be charged with the appropriate charges. And we decided not to wait. Well, I think that we can handle this situation. The situation is under control, the weapons are under control. I think that the situation is going to be resolved in the nearest days. For a while, I have such a response.

[...]

There is a result in the case of the murder of Verbitsky. This is a particular work, which can be demonstrated to society. There is a result relating to the investigation of mass murder crimes. This is a result, which we can demonstrate to society. [...]

Question:

Is there any work related to search of organizers, titushki ... and what are you going to do with this problem? In view of what is going on in the streets nowadays ...

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

I told you that the first arrests took place in the case of the murder of Verbinski and the kidnapping Igor Lutsenko. This is one of the main directions in this situation. The result serves as an answer to the question you have asked. In addition, a special investigation team has been working for the second day in Kharkov, the so-called Oplot society ... headed by Mr Zhilin. Mr Zhilin has left the territory of Ukraine already on the twenty first. However, the investigations are conducted in Kharkov and the appropriate conclusions will be deducted accordingly. There is a number of other areas on this issue. I think, it is worth to say about them when the result will come. You will hear it.

[...]

Question:

...

What do you do in this direction? Do you know the number of people who died in the Trade Union's house?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

I have a special submission from our non-governmental organizations. The most complete of them is one of the “Evromaydan SOS”, where there is a list of people who is allegedly disappeared. We have created a special group on this subject, which collects information on each person, including verification of all available to us information on prisons, detention, etc. We are not ready to provide you with statistics on this subject. I think that this information will be available in a few days. [...]

Question:

Tell us, please, which ... Where is Yanukovich now?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

Let me give explanation as to this question, because I was the first who have told about it, that we begin certain actions. All shaft of questions goes on me all these days. You should know, that the State Prosecutor's Office of Ukraine has organized a big investigatory group where there are also employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs included, about 40 people, which conducts investigation of massacre of citizens of Ukraine. The investigation is conducted within this special department. And, in this context, it would be more appropriate to address these questions to the General Prosecutor's Office and its investigatory department. And, please, do not expect that I can tell you something on the intersection points that are known to me on that account and all the information. I have reported the information on the first 3 days of moving of Yanukovych, because I have considered that this is extremely important from the civic point of view. So, I gave very clear information on this subject, which probably has shocked many people, but we assume that it was necessary at that time. Now, society will get the information, which General Prosecutor's Office considers is necessary to give. And that is normal.

[...]

There are two lines of investigation concerning abuse of the former special public security police unit "Berkut". The first big case is in the frames of the global investigation of killing people, which is conducted by the General Prosecutor's Office. It includes work of the corresponding investigators who work just on that subject. The second direction is the official investigations, which are assigned and disclose the facts on the basis of the analysis of documents, movement of arms, etc., orders. This is the second direction. According to the results of this analysis, decisions will be made.

[...]

Question:

If they are looking for Yanukovich, did they apply to Interpol?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

I had said at the very beginning that this matter is within the competence of the General Prosecutor's Office, there is a mandatory procedure, which has to be carried out regarding the case of mass murder of about 50 people, including six key leaders of a country. Let us not to disrupt this competence, and it will be today or tomorrow, or when the General Prosecutor decides that it is necessary and makes it public. I can only say that because on some web sites it is not published yet. Today, I have flipped through the press and have seen that they doubt. I have asked how it is possible that there are all the decisions, it is just a technical glitch, it did not come to the end of the system. I have told you that all formal necessities concerning the investigation of officers are decided by the General Prosecutor's of Ukraine. If the General Prosecutor's of Ukraine adopted a decision, signed the following documents, then immediately there appear cards and pictures and frames to those documents, and if not, the I will not make any other illegal actions, even if I know for sure that the subject X is a scoundrel. By this I will be distinguished from the former leadership of the country.

[...]

Question:

Did they start to check the activity of your predecessor?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

The predecessor is a subject in the case of mass killing in the course of public protests. Of course, there are questions to answer.

[...]

Question:

Are there any investigations on site of shooting people?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

Such an investigation is conducted. The investigation team is over 100 people and it includes specialists from different organizations, in particular, the Security Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the experts, many investigators of the General Prosecutor's Office, but I would like to emphasize that the key body here is the General Prosecutor's Office, it is under its direct investigative jurisdiction. We are just performers, we help.

Question:

What do you know about the motives of kidnappers of Lutsenko and the murderers of Verbitsky?

The answer of Arsen Avakov:

Frightening is the key motive.