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Ukraine says thwarts holiday "terrorist" bomb

Ukraine's state security service said on Monday it had foiled a bomb attack in the capital Kiev after detaining three people it said were involved in the plot.

The SBU said the attack had been planned for August 24, the former Soviet republic's Independence Day.

The announcement was likely to add to political tension, already high because of the trial of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko whose supporters plan to hold a demonstration in Kiev that day.

The SBU said in a statement it had prevented a "terrorist act" after its operatives found a home-made explosive device stuffed with nails when they raided premises rented by the suspects.

"According to information available to investigators, the attackers had planned to carry out the bombing on August 24 in Kiev or its suburbs during the celebrations of Ukraine's Independence Day," it said.

It had found 100 "extremist" leaflets but it gave no details on the suspects' nationality or their affiliation.

A little-known organization called "Ukraine's Patriot," part of a larger group named "Social-National Assembly," said in a statement later on Monday five of its members had been detained and its office raided by the SBU but denied plotting any attacks.

"Ukraine's Partiot and the Social-National Assembly state that their members have nothing to do with the... leaflets or the explosive device," it said in a statement.

"They had been planted in the organization's office in order to provoke repressions against members of the Social-National Assembly."

Unlike its ex-Soviet neighbor Russia, Ukraine has no recent history of large-scale bombings or violent political attacks.

However, the trial of Tymoshenko, a leader of the peaceful 2004 "Orange Revolution" and the fiercest opponent of President Viktor Yanukovich, has polarized the nation of 46 million.

State prosecutors accuse Tymoshenko of illegally forcing state energy firm Naftogaz into a gas supply deal with Russia's Gazprom that went against Ukraine's interests.

Tymoshenko, who narrowly lost to Yanukovich in the 2010 presidential elections, denies any wrongdoing and has called the case politically motivated.

Hundreds of her supporters plan to hold a demonstration in Kiev on Wednesday when Ukraine marks 20 years since it broke from the Soviet Union and became independent. (Writing by Olzhas Auyezov; Editing by Richard Balmforth/Maria Golovnina)