

Yanukovych Admits Administration Involvement in First Attack on Maidan Protest

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Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych testified to a court that the police attack on Maidan protesters, which took place on Nov. 30, 2013, may have been connected to the head of his administration, Sergei Levochkin.

"Yes, it's possible he was involved. Possibly. But I didn't personally have any evidence of this. And the investigation wasn't completed," Yanukovych told a Kiev court via video conference from a Rostov regional court on Monday.

Earlier in the questioning of Yanukovych as a witness in the case of former members of the Berkut special police unit, who are accused of beating protesters, mainly students, on Kiev's Independence Square, Yanukovych denied that he gave any orders to use force against demonstrators.

"From the very beginning to the end, I was against the use of weapons and against

bloodshed," Yanukovych said.

"I could not have given such an order," he added.

Yanukovych also claimed that his government was willing to sign the European Union Association Agreement that became the catalyst for the protests.

"If their demands had been peaceful, if they really put pressure on the government and forced us to sign the agreement, then there would have been no problems," he said.

The Euromaidan protests began in November 2013 when then-president Yanukovych announced that the signing of an EU trade agreement would be suspended. Although Yanukovych claimed that Ukraine would eventually see European integration, the refusal to sign the agreement led to mass demonstrations.

On the night of Nov. 30, riot police attacked the demonstrators' camp in Independence Square, which in turn led to more demonstrations and riots. An agreement between the government and opposition parties was eventually signed on Feb. 21 after dozens of protesters had been shot but in the early hours of Feb. 22 Yanukovych fled the capital, eventually seeking refuge in Russia.

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