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Yanukovych Request for Protection in Russia Granted, Official Says

By Christopher Brennan

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Former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych

Russian authorities have granted a request from ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych for protection on Russian territory, an unidentified government official said Thursday.

News agency Interfax cited a statement from Yanukovych, in which the deposed president said that he and those close to him had received death threats and asked Russia to ensure his "safety from the activities of extremists."

A "source in the power structures of the Russian federation" later told Interfax that Russia had accepted Yanukovych's request.

Russian news outlet RBK earlier reported that Yanukovych stayed at the Hotel Ukraina in central Moscow before moving to a Kremlin sanatorium outside Moscow. The hotel issued an

official denial of the report on Thursday.

The whereabouts of Yanukovych, who is on an international wanted list, have been largely unknown since he fled Kiev over the weekend amid rising violence between anti-government protesters and police. News reports said that he had tried to leave the country on a flight from Donetsk on Saturday, only to be denied by border guards.

Yanukovych's statement said he still considers himself president of Ukraine and that recent decisions made by the Ukrainian parliament since his departure were not legitimate, adding that the agreement between his administration and opposition leaders on Feb. 21 had gone unfulfilled.

He urged a resolution to the turmoil in the country based on the previous agreement and said, “now it becomes visible, that the people in south-east Ukraine and Crimea do not accept anarchy and lawlessness in the country, when the leaders of ministries are elected by the crowd in a square.”

The acting Ukrainian government has expressed fears of separatism in eastern parts of the country since Yanukovych fled Kiev and was impeached by the country's parliament. Armed men believed to be part of a pro-Russia group took control of Crimean government buildings on Wednesday night.

The ousted president ordered the armed forces of Ukraine not to interfere in political events and added that any order to use the country's military would be a crime.

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