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International Community Urges Caution in Ukraine

By Christopher Brennan

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Correction appended:
Canada has recalled its ambassador to Russia after President Vladimir Putin received approval from the Federation Council to send Russian troops into Ukraine, a move that has triggered criticism and concern from the international community.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper recalled his ambassador and said Canada condemned military intervention in Ukraine "in the strongest terms," also calling for Putin to withdraw forces, The Toronto Star reported.

The withdrawal follows Saturday's announcement that the ambassador had been brought back to Canada for "consultations," a measure also taken by Lithuania on Sunday.

The statement from Harper, who reportedly spoke with U.S. President Barack Obama about Ukraine on Saturday, came amid rising tensions between Russia and Western countries.

The Federation Council also suggested withdrawing Russia's ambassador to Washington on Saturday.

Canada also announced that it would suspend participation in planning for a Group of Eight summit being held by Russia in June, a step Obama informed Putin about during a 90-minute phone call Saturday, a White House press release said.

The Federation Council unanimously approved Putin's call to use Russian military forces in Ukraine on Saturday, though news outlets reported that Russian-speaking soldiers without insignia had already taken control of the heavily pro-Russian Crimea region. Last week the region's parliament called for a referendum on greater autonomy to be held at the end of March, and many observers see currents of separatism arising in the southeastern parts of Ukraine.

Russia's use of force in Ukraine, approved by the Federation Council until the situation in the country stabilizes, drew responses from various countries.

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen called an emergency meeting of NATO in Brussels on Sunday and said in a statement that Russia's actions "threatens peace and security in Europe," Reuters reported.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Sunday that Russia had no right to deploy its military in Ukrainian sovereign territory beyond the rules of the treaty on the Russian Black Sea fleet and urged Russia not to take actions that could lead to "escalation with uncertain, possibly dramatic consequences."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Sunday saying it was "deeply concerned" by events in Ukraine and urging a "legal framework" for a resolution. The statement added that China, which normally does not play an active role in international crises, respects Ukraine's "independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Correction: An earlier version of this article said that Stephen Harper was the president of Canada. He is the prime minister.

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