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State TV Runs Report on Foreign Mercenaries in Kiev

By Christopher Brennan

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A Russian returning from demonstrations in Ukraine told Russian state television that the Kiev protesters' ranks are filled with Western-backed mercenaries.

The young man — a 21-year-old who gave his name only as Vladislav and was detained by the Federal Security Service upon re-entering Russia — said that Euromaidan activists looted parliament members' houses and then handed documents over to uniformed American military members, Rossia-24 reported Sunday.

Vladislav told the television channel that he went to Kiev with the intention of participating in looting and had to prove to members of the nationalist Right Sector group that he was not a Russian operative.

His reported experience in the Ukrainian capital, where he said there are many American, Polish and German mercenaries who are often drunk or on drugs, supports a long-running

stream of state television broadcasts and Foreign Ministry statements that have attributed the political turmoil in Ukraine to foreign backers.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that Western countries were putting "geopolitical calculations" before the interests of the Ukrainian people. Diplomats from Europe and the U.S. have issued a flurry of statements condemning the increased presence of Russian military forces in Crimea, an area that has seen rising separatist tensions since a pro-Western government took power from ousted president and Kremlin ally Viktor Yanukovych last month.

Vladislav was not the only Russian to be questioned while returning from Ukraine. Last week opposition activists Ildar Dadin and Emil Terekhin were detained at Kievsky Station and searched by police after they returned from participating in the Euromaidan protests.

Lifenews reported last week that intelligence officials had given police a list of 32 Russian opposition members who had traveled to Kiev to gain "experience in organizing mass riots" and would be checked upon their return.

The report said the activists were members of Other Russia, an unregistered opposition political party, election monitoring organization Golos, as well as various LGBT groups.

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