

Ukraine Invites NATO to Hold Meeting in Kiev

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Arseny Yatsenyuk has invited the NATO Council to hold a meeting in Kiev./ VO Svoboda / Wikicommons

BRUSSELS — Ukraine's interim prime minister has said he has invited the NATO Council to hold a meeting in Kiev over the recent developments in the political crisis in the country.

"I invited the North Atlantic Council to visit Kiev and hold a meeting there," Arseny Yatsenyuk said Thursday during a visit to Brussels, where he met with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and EU officials.

"We believe that it will strengthen our cooperation," Yatsenyuk said.

He also reiterated Ukraine's request for additional military aid from NATO "to strengthen the country's defenses on the technical level."

Ukraine earlier appealed for assistance from NATO, asking the alliance to use all possible measures to ensure the country's territorial integrity and protect its people following

the approval by Russia's parliament of the deployment of military forces in Ukraine.

The political crisis in the former Soviet republic has led to the current standoff between Russia and the West over the fate of Crimea, an autonomous Ukrainian region with a majority ethnic Russian population.

Crimean authorities have refused to recognize as legitimate the new central government in Kiev, which ousted President Viktor Yanukovich late last month, and on Thursday they announced a decision to become part of Russia.

Yatsenyuk said earlier Thursday that the Crimean parliament's vote to secede was an "illegitimate decision" and again accused Russia of undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity as thousands of "local militia" allegedly under Russian command have taken control over Ukrainian military bases across Crimea in the past week.

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