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Ukraine Won't Get Dragged Into Crimean Military Intervention, Acting President Says

By The Moscow Times

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Ukraine will not launch a military intervention in Crimea as it would draw defenses away from the country's eastern border, where a significant buildup of Russian tank units has taken place, Ukraine's acting president has said.

"They are provoking us to have a pretext to intervene on the Ukrainian mainland ... [but] we cannot follow the scenario written by the Kremlin," interim President Oleksandr Turchynov said Tuesday, Agence France Presse reported.

However, he has called for the parliament to approve the creation of a national guard and for the mobilization of reserves and volunteers "to defend the country and citizens against any criminals, against external and internal aggression," The Associated Press reported Tuesday.

Turchynov said that Russia has so far refused to enter into talks with his interim government

in Kiev.

Russia has already increased its military presence in Ukraine's Crimea region, home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet, following the removal of pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovych in February.

On Sunday, Crimean authorities — led by Sergei Aksyonov, a Russian citizen — will hold a referendum with a view to expanding Crimea's autonomy and becoming part of Russia.

Kiev has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the referendum, with Turchynov describing it is a "sham" and saying that the Kremlin will falsify the results.

Europe's security and democracy watchdog, the OSCE, said Tuesday that they won't monitor Sunday's vote in Crimea as it is "in contradiction with the Ukrainian Constitution."

Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk is set to meet U.S President Barack Obama on Wednesday in Washington, where they are likely to discuss a multi-billion-dollar aid package to stop Ukraine's economy collapsing completely.

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