

Ukraine Moves to Mobilize 40,000 Reservists in Response to Russian 'Aggression'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Members of a Maidan self-defense unit standing guard outside Ukraine's parliament building in Kiev on Monday.

KIEV — Ukraine's parliament endorsed on Monday a plan to mobilize 40,000 reservists to counter Russia's "blatant aggression" in Crimea and guard against what a senior official described as further incursions in the south and east of the country.

Andrei Parubiy, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council, told parliament that 20,000 reservists would be deployed as part of the armed forces and the other half would serve in a newly created National Guard.

Crimea was brought under Russian control earlier this month and in a referendum held on Sunday, more than 96 percent of voters were officially said to have backed a proposal

to secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia.

"What has taken place is a seizure, blatant aggression, the seizure by Russia of parts of the territory of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol," Parubiy told the chamber before the vote.

"We now have grounds to state that the measures being taken today are enough to prevent a repeat of the Crimean scenario in Ukraine's southeastern regions."

These regions include Donetsk and Kharkiv, two cities that have seen unrest and clashes between pro-Russian and rival demonstrators, as well as Odessa, a Black Sea coastal area to the northwest of Crimea.

A total of 275 members in the 450-seat assembly backed the measure. About 30 deputies in the chamber refused to vote.

A decree by acting President Oleksander Turchynov called for mobilization within 45 days and provided for complete financing and provision of facilities for the reservists.

President Vladimir Putin has said he reserves the right to defend the rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians in southern and eastern Ukraine following the installation of a pro-Western government in Kiev last month. However, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said Moscow has no plans to invade these areas.

Violent pro-Russian demonstrations have taken place in eastern Ukrainian cities, disturbances blamed by authorities in Kiev on "Kremlin agents."

Russia rejected as biased on Monday an assessment by a United Nations official who questioned accusations that Ukraine's Russian-speaking population faced systematic human rights abuses.

The Foreign Ministry statement criticized UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic, who said last week that there had been violations against ethnic Russians in Ukraine but said there was no evidence they were "widespread or systematic."

"The biased, prejudiced and unobjective assessment of I. Simonovic on the human rights situation in the country calls forth surprise and confusion," the ministry said in a statement. *(Reuters)*

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