

# Putin Warns Against Letting West Use Anti-Kremlin Groups

April 07, 2014



Putin delivering a speech at an FSB board meeting in Moscow on Monday.

President Vladimir Putin told the Federal Security Service, or FSB, on Monday to ensure that Russia did not follow what he said was Ukraine's example by letting the West use local groups for "destructive" purposes.

Putin's remarks signaled his lingering concern that the West could use nongovernmental organizations to fuel dissent in Russia, despite a clampdown on groups funded from abroad since large-scale protests against him in the winter of 2011-2012.

He also urged the FSB not to drop its guard against militant attacks following the Sochi Winter Olympics and to strengthen vigilance in the Arctic and to the south to prevent attacks on Russia.

"We must clearly differentiate between legal opposition activity, as is in every democratic country, and extremism, which is built on hatred, inciting national and international discord, and defying the law and the constitution," Putin told a meeting of FSB leaders, according to a

transcript of the speech posted on the Kremlin website.

"We need to tell the difference between civilized opponents of the authorities and the serving of foreign national interests that harm our country," he said.

Russia has accused the West of supporting protests in Kiev that brought down Ukraine's pro-Russia President Viktor Yanukovich. The West has dismissed the accusations.

As part of the Russian government's tightening of control on NGOs, parliament passed a law in November 2012 that obliges groups that receive funding from abroad and whose activities are "political" in nature to register as "foreign agents" in Russia.

Moscow has said the law was needed to limit the influence of foreign governments inside the country, while NGOs and Western governments have decried the measure as a tactic intended to put pressure on civil society and limit dissent.

Putin said Monday that the government will not allow the activities of NGOs to be used toward "destructive goals."

"Modern Russian legislation creates all of the conditions for the transparent and free activity of nongovernmental social organizations, but we will never allow them to be used for destructive goals," Putin said.

In a wide-ranging speech, Putin also announced various results of the country's security services, saying that Russia's intelligence agencies last year stopped 46 foreign officials and 258 agents from spying in the country.

Putin called for tightening the security of national information resources, telecommunications and databases containing state secrets. Last year, more than 9 million targeted attacks on Russian government websites were uncovered, he said.

"We should be prepared that such attempts to enter our information space will continue," Putin said.

A series of coordinated cyber-attacks by hackers in mid-March interrupted services of several Russian government websites, including those of the Russian presidential administration, Central Bank, and the Foreign Ministry. The hacker attacks came amid heightened tensions with Ukraine over Crimea, which Russia annexed last month following a referendum that it called legitimate but the West said was a sham.

*Material from RIA Novosti is included in this report.*

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/04/07/putin-warns-against-letting-west-use-anti-kremlin-groups-a33717>