

Putin Calls Ukrainian Military Operation 'Criminal'

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President Vladimir Putin opened his marathon call-in show on Thursday with a question about the situation in Ukraine, answering that the country's government had committed a crime by sending forces into the Donetsk region.

"The use of tanks and aviation against the residents of eastern Ukraine is another crime from today's Kiev authorities," Putin said.

Putin's call-in show Thursday was expected to feature the president responding to a range of questions about the political situation in Ukraine, which escalated last week as pro-Russian separatists seized government buildings in a number of eastern Ukrainian cities.

Kiev responded earlier this week by sending in army troops. Clashes in recent days between armed forces and separatists have resulted in several deaths, but pro-Russia militants remain in control of around 10 towns in eastern Ukraine.

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