

Biden Warns Russia 'Time Is Short' on Geneva Deal

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U.S. Vice President Joe Biden grinning for the cameras as he walks past barricades in Kiev on Tuesday. Biden called on Moscow to encourage pro-Russia separatists in eastern Ukraine to vacate government buildings they have seized, accept amnesty and "address their grievances politically."

KIEV — In a show of U.S. support for Ukraine's embattled government, Vice President Joe Biden delivered an aid package Tuesday and demanded Russia back off but also warned Kiev it must tackle the "cancer of corruption."

Demanding Moscow "stop talking and start acting" to disarm pro-Russian separatists who Ukraine says aim to undermine the May 25 election, Biden told presidential candidates it may be "the most important election in Ukrainian history."

Part of the \$50-million aid package was earmarked to support the "integrity" of the vote. But after 23 years of post-Soviet independence from Moscow that have seen endemic graft sap the economy and public faith in the state, Biden told lawmakers: "To be very blunt ... you have to fight the cancer of corruption."

Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who took office after the overthrow of Ukraine's Kremlin-backed president two months ago, told him that this would be a priority of the new administration.

Repeating a threat of heavier economic sanctions after those imposed following the annexation of Crimea last month, Biden renewed U.S. calls for Russia to pull back troops from Ukraine's eastern border and said "time is short" for Moscow to show it is upholding its commitments under a four-way agreement signed in Geneva on Thursday that is intended to defuse the crisis.

Ukraine and its U.S. and European Union allies, which signed the accord with Russia, complain Moscow is failing to persuade separatists in the east to disarm and vacate occupied public buildings. Russia denies it is orchestrating the militants, who say they want the chance to join Crimea in being annexed by Moscow.

"No nation should threaten its neighbors by amassing troops along the border. We call on Russia to pull these forces," Biden told a joint news conference after meeting Yatsenyuk.

"We have been clear that more provocative behavior by Russia will lead to more costs and to greater isolation," the vice president said. "We have heard a lot from Russian officials in the past few days. But now it's time for Russia to stop talking and start acting."

Biden added: "We will not allow this to become an open-ended process. Time is short in which to make progress."

Yatsenyuk said: "Everything that is now happening in the east and that Russia is supporting is aimed at wrecking the presidential election.

"We demand that our Russian neighbors immediately recall their special forces, which are in the east, recall the Army from Crimea and turn this shameful page in which Ukrainian territory has been seized by Russian troops."

Of the \$50 million in new aid, the White House said in a statement, \$11.4 million was earmarked for helping with the election to choose a successor to President Viktor Yanukovich.

It also offered an additional \$8 million in nonlethal military aid, including radios and vehicles.

Small in terms of Ukraine's needs and in relation to the \$1 billion loan guarantee already signed with Washington, the aid package, along with Biden's visit, was a clear show of support for the new authorities in the confrontation with Russia.

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