

Putin Undecided on Support for Ukrainian Separatist Vote

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President Vladimir Putin earlier called for separatists in eastern Ukraine to postpone their planned referendum.

President Vladimir Putin will wait until the results of Ukraine's separatists referendums are known before deciding whether or not to recognize them, the Kremlin's spokesman was quoted as saying by a Russian media report.

"Forecasting [Putin's reaction] would be difficult," presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said when asked about Putin's response to the Sunday balloting staged by pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine, Kommersant reported Monday.

Putin will choose his position about the votes based "on their results," Peskov was quoted as saying.

Putin made an unexpected statement last week, calling for separatists to postpone the balloting. The Ukrainian government and Western nations have denounced the referendum as illegitimate.

But Putin's recommendation "was difficult to heed, even considering the authoritativeness of the Russian president," Peskov was quoted as saying. Separatists "have decided to act according to their own plan and based on the situation on the ground," he said.

The head of the self-styled election commission in the "People's Republic" of Donetsk, Roman Lyahin, said that his panel has counted all the ballots and determined that more than 89 percent of voters cast ballots for the region's self-rule, Interfax reported. He placed voter turnout at nearly 75 percent.

Voter turnout in the Luhansk region reached more than 80 percent, local election commission spokesman Vasiliy Nikitin said, Itar-Tass reported Monday. He did not specify vote count results.

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