

White House Wants \$1 Billion War Funding to Help 'Friends' Like Ukraine

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The White House has submitted to Congress a 2015 military funding request that includes \$1 billion to support NATO allies in Europe in response to Russia's interference in Ukraine.

The money is part of a total \$65.8 billion Overseas Contingency Operations request that U.S. President Barack Obama submitted Thursday, the White House said in a statement. The overall request is the lowest in years, as it follows Obama's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

The \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative, which Obama had pledged earlier this month in response to Russia's policies, comprises \$925 million for the Department of Defense and \$75 million for the Department of State to expand military presence across Europe, but particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, and to support NATO members and allies,

the White House said.

The money would, among other issues, boost the military capacity of "close friends such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine," the White House had said in an earlier statement.

But the bulk of the overall package — \$58.6 billion — would fund the war in Afghanistan and other overseas military activity, the statement said. The request is about \$21 billion less than the \$79.4 billion granted for this fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30, and is also less than the \$79.4 "placeholder" estimate that had been proposed for the 2015 budget before Obama announced plans last month to sharply reduce the U.S'. military presence in Afghanistan.

Beside the European initiative, the request also includes \$500 million to increase U.S. support to the "moderate" factions of the Syrian opposition fighting against the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The money would "train and equip vetted elements of the Syrian armed opposition to help defend the Syrian people, stabilize areas under opposition control, facilitate the provision of essential services, counter terrorist threats, and promote conditions for a negotiated settlement," the White House said in a statement.

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