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Putin Sends Mixed Message at Security Council Meeting

By Allison Quinn

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While the president said there was no “direct military threat to the sovereignty and integrity” of Russia, he lashed out at NATO and the West, saying Russia would “increase its defense capabilities” in response to NATO activity close to its borders.

President Vladimir Putin appeared to take one step forward and two steps back Tuesday, appeasing the international community with promises of cooperation in the investigation of downed Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 but blaming the West for interference in Ukraine and warning "outside forces" against orchestrating color revolutions.

Speaking at a meeting of Russia's Security Council — whose scheduling set observers on edge Monday when it was announced as a session devoted to Russia's "territorial integrity" — Putin stressed that Russia would "do everything in its power" to assist in the investigation into the tragedy that claimed 298 lives on Thursday.

For the first time since the incident, he responded to Western demands for Moscow to put

pressure on the pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine whom the U.S. has accused of downing the plane.

"We are being urged to influence the separatists in eastern Ukraine. Everything that is in our power, I repeat, of course we will do it," he said, adding, however, that "even that is not enough" to stop the conflict in Ukraine.

To resolve the situation, he said, the West would have to put pressure on Kiev to get the new authorities to stop shelling areas in the east.

"Even yesterday, when the separatists were handing over the black boxes, Ukraine's air force organized an attack on Donetsk. International experts who had arrived at the wreckage site could not even stick their heads out. It is necessary, once and for all, to call on the Kiev authorities to abide by elementary norms of decency, to introduce a cease-fire, at least for a short time for the investigation," Putin said, according to a transcript on the Kremlin's website.

While the president said there was no "direct military threat to the sovereignty and integrity" of Russia, he lashed out at NATO and the West, saying Russia would "increase its defense capabilities" in response to NATO activity close to its borders.

In an apparent knock at NATO, he said that "Russia, thank God, is not a member of any alliances, and that is to a certain extent a guarantee of our sovereignty."

He also reiterated earlier statements that the current situation in Ukraine, which has experienced a low-simmering war in the east since the ouster of pro-Kremlin former President Viktor Yanukovych in February, is partly the result of "outside forces."

"Today, more and more often the language of ultimatums and sanctions can be heard, and the understanding of sovereign states has been blurred; undesirable regimes, countries conducting independent policies, or those that simply stand in the way of someone else's interests, are becoming destabilized. They do this by means of so-called color revolutions, or to call a spade a spade: coups instigated and financed by outside forces," he said.

"Russia is being presented with what is almost an ultimatum: 'Let us destroy this part of the population that is ethnically and historically close to Russia and we will not impose sanctions against you,'" Putin said. "This is strange and unacceptable logic."

He warned that any attempts by "outside forces" to stir up a color revolution in Russia would not work.

"Our people, our citizens, the people of Russia, will not allow it. And they will never accept it," he said.

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