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U.S. and Italy Threaten New Sanctions if Russia Goes Ahead With Ukraine 'Aid' Mission

By The Moscow Times

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U.S. President Barack Obama delivers a statement on the situation in Iraq from his vacation home at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

U.S. President Barack Obama agreed in a phone call with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi that any Russian intervention in Ukraine, including actions "under the guise of 'humanitarian' assistance," would result in further Western sanctions on Russia's already teetering economy.

Any actions that do not receive the formal authorization of the Ukrainian government "would violate international law and would lead to additional sanctions," according to a statement published Monday on the White House website.

Russia on Tuesday sent 280 trucks bearing humanitarian aid to Ukraine amid international

fears that Moscow could use the deliveries as a pretext for an invasion in support of pro-Russian separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, Reuters reported. Fighting between the rebels and the Ukrainian armed forces in eastern Ukraine has seen over a hundred thousand people flee their homes, according to the UN.

The convey, which left from an area near Moscow, will take several days to traverse the 1,000 kilometers to eastern Ukraine, ITAR-Tass reported.

The EU and U.S. in July slapped their harshest sanctions yet on Russia over its alleged backing of separatist fighters in eastern Ukraine, barring state-owned Russian banks from raising long-term debt in Western capital markets and banning a range of technology exports to Russia.

The EU and U.S. have reiterated that the sanctions may be escalated at any point if Russia fails to change its course in Ukraine.

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