

# Secret U.S.-Russia Talks on Ukraine Held in Finland

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The Finnish Foreign Ministry says the United States and Russia held secret talks over Ukraine in Finland in June.

Ministry spokesman Vesa Hakkinen told The Associated Press that the ministry helped organize the meeting on the island of Boisto, off the southern Finnish coast, but declined to give more information.

Earlier this month, Finnish President Sauli Niinisto met President Vladimir Putin and traveled to Ukraine for talks with President Petro Poroshenko, leading to speculation that he was acting on behalf of the European Union.

Niinisto's office said Tuesday that he was not involved in the secret June talks between the U.S. and Russia.

U.S.-Russian relations have tumbled to a low in recent months unparalleled since the end of the Cold War era.

In response to disregard in the West for Russia's annexation of Crimea in March, as well as what it views as Russian involvement in the Ukraine conflict, the U.S. and European Union have imposed a slew of sanctions against Russia in recent months.

In response, Russia imposed a ban on the import of many EU and U.S. goods as part of tit-for-tat sanctions related to the Ukraine crisis.

*(AP, MT)*

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