

Australian Leader Plans Tough Words With Russia

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Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of Australia, addresses the 69th United Nations General Assembly at the U.N. headquarters in New York September 25, 2014.

CANBERRA, Australia — Australia's prime minister warned on Monday that he intends to use tough language with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Australia next month in demanding full cooperation from Russia with the Dutch investigation into the shooting down of a Malaysian airliner in July.

Putin has confirmed that he will attend a summit of the world's 20 biggest economies to be chaired by Australia in the east coast city of Brisbane on Nov. 15-16.

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said he would seek a bilateral meeting with Putin about Russian-backed rebels shooting down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine as it headed from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on July 17. All 298 people on board the plane died, including 38 Australian citizens and residents.

"I'm going to shirtfront Mr. Putin," Abbott told reporters, using an Australian Rules Football

term for a head-on charge aimed at knocking an opponent to the ground.

"There'll be a lot of tough conversations with Russia, and I suspect the conversation that I have with Mr. Putin will be the toughest conversation of all," he said.

Abbott said he plans to tell Putin: "Australians were murdered — they were murdered by Russian-backed rebels using Russian-supplied equipment. We are very unhappy about this. We accept that you didn't want this to happen, but we now demand that you fully cooperate with the criminal investigation."

"And if the criminal investigation identifies suspects that you have some influence over, they've got to be produced and justice has got to be done," Abbott added.

Russia and Australia have introduced trade sanctions against each other in recent months as bilateral relations deteriorated over Russia's involvement in the Ukraine conflict.

Australian opposition leader Bill Shorten said that Putin shouldn't attend the G20 meeting in Brisbane, and that Australia shouldn't be "laying out the red carpet" for him.

Australia has taken a leading role in the international response to the airliner disaster, and was the author of a UN Security Council resolution that was unanimously passed days after the tragedy. The resolution demanded that separatists who controlled the crash site allow the dead to be retrieved and international investigators free access.

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