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Poroshenko Challenged to Duel by East Ukrainian Rebel Leader

By Allison Quinn

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Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko speaks during a news conference after a meeting with Slovakia's President Andrej Kiska at the presidential palace in Bratislava on Nov. 16, 2014.

The head of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic has challenged Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to a duel in an open letter suggesting various means of resolving the country's ongoing crisis, the TASS news agency reported Wednesday.

"Let's follow the example of the ancient Slavic leaders and great Cossack chieftains and come together for a duel. Whoever wins will dictate their terms to the opposing side. Why ignite mutual hatred while destroying people, the economy, cities? These are wounds that both you and we will have to treat for decades to come! Isn't it better to end all disagreements by means of an honest duel?" Igor Plotinsky was cited as saying.

Plotinsky, who asserted victory in the self-proclaimed republic's controversial elections last month, said Poroshenko could choose the location for the duel, as well as the weapon to be

used, TASS reported. He also suggested that the duel could be broadcast live on TV.

Plotinsky said that if he won the duel, he would begin by ending all military action in the country's turbulent east, and would then force "all legal, half-legal, paralegal and illegal armed groups" into exile.

"If you still want to spill the blood of your own and our soldiers, their wives, mothers, old men and children, then prove that you are ready to spill even your own blood. Accept my challenge," Plotinsky wrote in closing the letter.

Poroshenko has not commented on Plotinsky's proposal, but Yevhen Perebyinis, a spokesman for Ukraine's Foreign Ministry, tweeted that Plotinsky was "worthy only of a duel with a Ukrainian court."

Plotinsky "managed the insidious abduction" of Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko and handed her over to Russia's Federal Security Service, Perebyinis wrote.

Russia accuses Savchenko, a Ukrainian helicopter pilot, of abetting the killing of two Russian journalists who died during a shelling attack in eastern Ukraine on June 17. Shortly after the deaths, Savchenko turned up in Russian custody across the border.

Russian officials claim she went to Russia voluntarily, posing as a refugee. Savchenko maintains that she was abducted.

She was transferred to Moscow's Serbsky institute of forensic psychiatry early this fall for an evaluation.

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