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Kremlin's Former Chief Ideologue to Participate in Minsk Talks

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Vladislav Surkov

Presidential aide Vladislav Surkov, famed for his long-time stint as the Kremlin's chief ideologue, plans to participate Tuesday in a round of hotly anticipated Ukraine peace talks in Minsk, state news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Representatives of Russia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Kiev and the rebels' self-proclaimed republics in east Ukraine are meeting in Minsk Tuesday to lay the groundwork for a top-level meeting on Wednesday.

Surkov is expected to play a role in Tuesday's session, RIA Novosti reported, citing Alexander Surikov, Russia's ambassador to Belarus.

President Vladimir Putin is expected to attend Wednesday's talks, along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and France's President Francois Hollande.

After resigning from his position as Deputy Prime Minister in 2013, Surkov, who is popularly

known as the Kremlin's gray cardinal, became Putin's point man for relations with the breakaway Georgian republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as with Ukraine.

Between 1999 and 2008, Surkov served as deputy chief of the Kremlin administration, where he gained notoriety as its chief ideologue and coined such key concepts as that of “sovereign democracy.” Surkov is widely believed to have been behind the Kremlin's surge for control over Russian media and the creation of zealous pro-Kremlin youth movements. He is also believed to have helped establish several political parties that have been dubbed "loyal opposition" by pundits.

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