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Putin Says Russian Intelligence Shows U.S. Is Already Arming Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has claimed the U.S. is supplying Kiev with lethal weapons, telling reporters that the conflict in Ukraine will not be resolved through military escalation.

"According to our intelligence, [U.S.] weapons are already being delivered," Putin was shown on state television Channel One as telling a press conference on Tuesday, when asked if a shipment of lethal hardware from Washington to Kiev would fan the flames of war in eastern Ukraine.

Putin, speaking in Budapest during a presidential visit to Hungary, added that arms deliveries would only contribute to the loss of lives in the war-torn region.

"I am deeply convinced that whoever and whatever weapons are delivered to the conflict zone, the [outcome] will always be bad ... the number of victims could increase," he said in comments widely published by Russian media.

Kiev and Western nations, in turn, have for months accused Moscow of arming pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine — a charge the Kremlin has repeatedly denied.

In December the U.S. Congress passed legislation authorizing the sending of arms to Kiev. But while U.S. President Barack Obama signed the measure into law, he has been hesitant to use the option, amid widespread warnings arming Kiev would be seen as a declaration of war.

Editor's note: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated Putin gave the press conference in Bucharest instead of Budapest.

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