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Moldova Blocks Screening of Russian Film on Crimea Annexation

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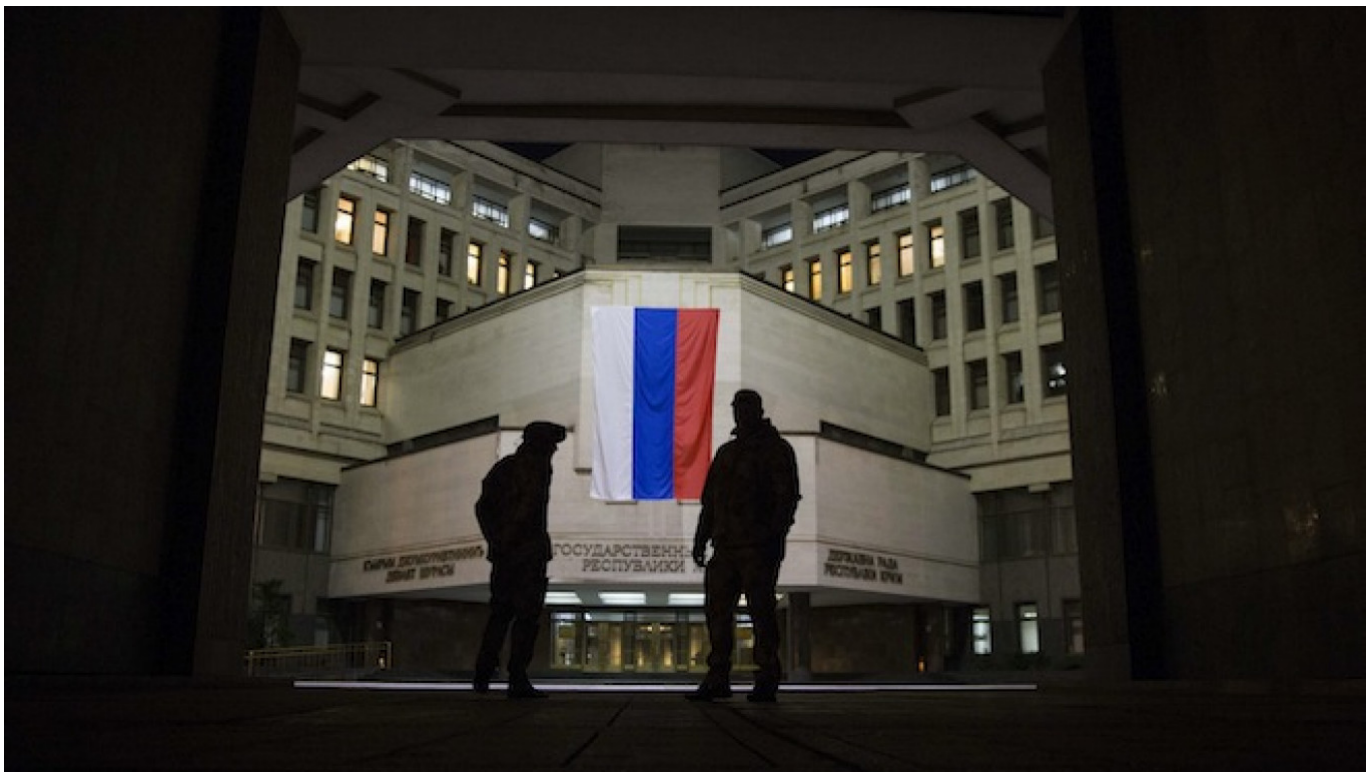

Members of the People's Militia of Crimea stand guard outside the State Council building, during preparations for the first anniversary of the Crimean referendum to secede from Ukraine and join Russia, in Simferopol, March 13, 2015.

Moldova has blocked the screening of a Russian documentary promoting the annexation of Crimea, and has banned the maker of the film and a top state-run media executive from entering the country, news reports said.

The film, titled "Crimea: The Path to the Motherland" was scheduled to be shown at the Moldova-based offices of Russia's Rossia Segodnya state-run news agency, but the screening was canceled for "technical reasons," after security officials told the head of the news bureau that the presentation of the film was "undesirable," Ekho Moskvy reported Thursday.

Moldova — a former Soviet republic that in 1990 lost a strip of its land, Transdnestr, to pro-Moscow separatists similar to those rebelling in eastern Ukraine today — has also banned entry to the country for the film's maker Andrei Kondrashov, and the head of Rossia Segodnya, Dmitry Kiselyov, Interfax reported, citing Moldova's Interior Ministry.

Kondrashov and Kiselyov, who also hosts a talk show on Rossia 1 television known for its virulent anti-Western rhetoric in favor of the Kremlin, had been scheduled to take part in a video conference introducing the film, the report said.

The documentary was shown across Russia this week to mark the anniversary of Crimea's March 16 referendum on joining Russia — a balloting that paved the way for the annexation. Western governments and Kiev have denounced the referendum, saying that the separatist bid contradicted the Ukrainian Constitution, and the voting was influenced by the heavy presence of Russian troops and the lack of public debate.

In an interview for the film, Russia's President Vladimir Putin said he ordered his staff to begin preparations for annexing Crimea weeks before the referendum, contradicting Moscow's previous claims that the takeover was prompted by the vote.

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