

Presidential Award for Paratroopers Has 'Nothing to Do' With Ukraine — Kremlin

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President Vladimir Putin has issued awards for military valor to two paratrooper units, though the Kremlin insists this has nothing to do with the crisis in Ukraine as Russian troops have "no involvement" there.

Putin awarded the honorary "Guard" title to two paratrooper brigades and to a communication regiment for the "massive heroism, valor, perseverance and bravery demonstrated by troops in military action" as well as for "achievements during peace time," according to a presidential decree cited Wednesday by the Interfax news agency.

The award comes amid widespread Western reports of Russian paratroopers fighting alongside pro-Moscow separatists in eastern Ukraine. But presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov insists any connection with the awards and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine is "out of the question," Interfax said.

"We know that Russian armed forces, regular units did not have and do not have any involvement in those events," Peskov was quoted as saying.

While Moscow concedes that some of its citizens are fighting as volunteers in Ukraine, it has repeatedly denied claims that its troops are operating on Ukrainian territory.

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