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Ukraine's Poroshenko Says He Doesn't Trust Putin

By The Moscow Times

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Ukrainian President Poroshenko speaks during a news conference after a meeting with EU top official in Kiev, April 27, 2015.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has said that he does not trust Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin but has no option but to negotiate with him because Ukraine will not regain its lost territory through military action.

In an interview with the BBC's Fergal Keane aired Tuesday, Poroshenko opened up about his relationship with Putin as well as the ongoing war in east Ukraine between government forces and pro-Russian rebels.

Asked by Keane whether he trusted the Russian leader, Poroshenko answered "Trust? No ... [but] I don't think the [return of the eastern territories] would happen by military means."

Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine last spring.

Since then, Moscow has repeatedly denied accusations from Kiev and the West that it is supplying separatists in the east with weapons and manpower.

Just days before the BBC aired its interview, Ukraine's security services said they had captured two Russian servicemen who they said admitted on video to carrying out a surveillance mission in eastern Ukraine.

The men are no longer serving in the army but did previously serve in the army and have military training, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told the TASS news agency Monday.

Poroshenko also said in the BBC interview that he thought Russia was preparing for another military offensive in Ukraine, despite the fact that his country had avoided provoking Moscow, and that "we should be ready" for this.

"Can I be absolutely clear with you this is not a fight with Russian-backed separatists, this is a real war with Russia," he was cited as saying.

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