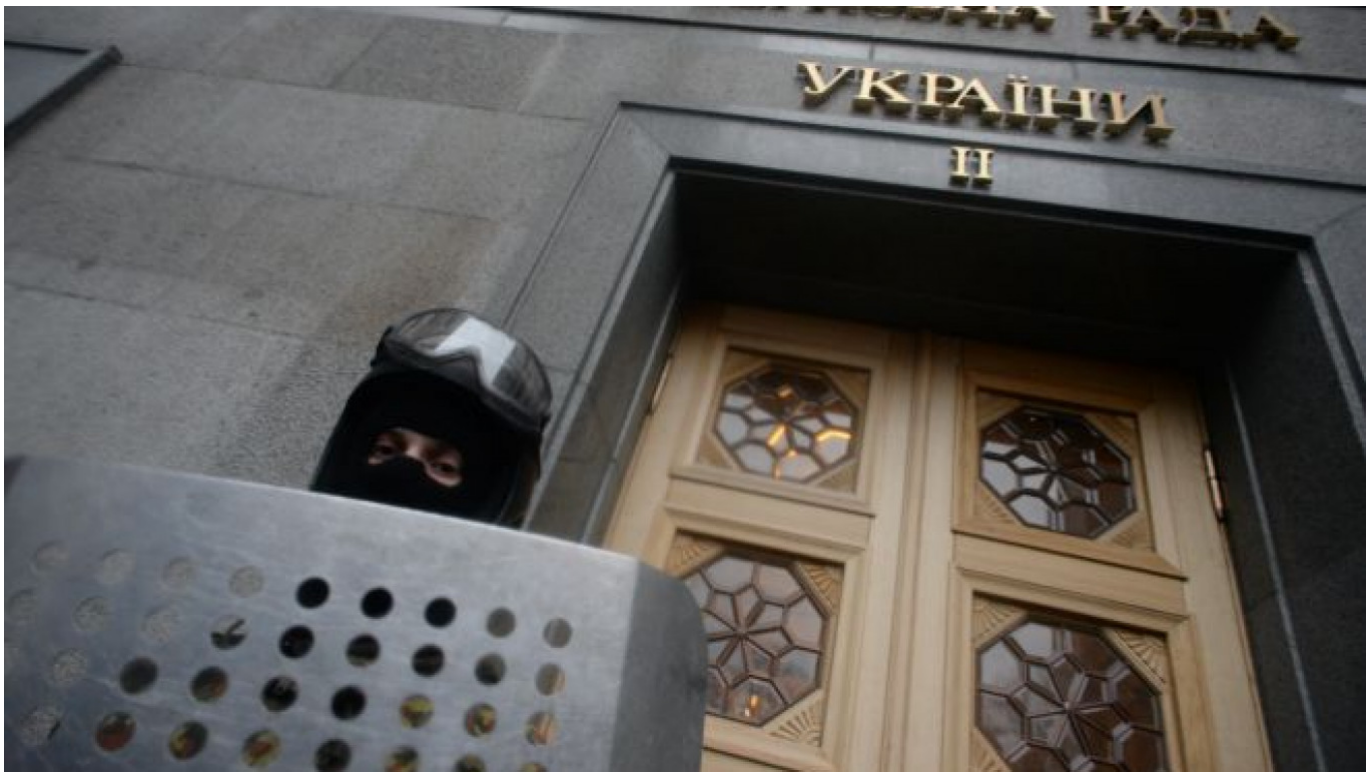
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Ukraine Lawmakers Suspend Military Cooperation With Russia

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Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada

Ukraine's parliament on Thursday voted to suspend military cooperation with Russia in a long-anticipated move signaling a further break in relations between the once-close partners.

The five cooperation agreements scrapped by the Verkhovna Rada include one giving the Russian military transit rights to reach Moldova, whose territory is partly controlled by a Moscow-supported separatist government.

Relations between Russia and Ukraine plummeted after the overthrow in February 2014 of Moscow-friendly Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych. Russia subsequently annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Kiev also accuses Moscow of arming and staffing separatist insurgencies in eastern Ukraine.

In turning away from Russia, Ukraine has increasingly reached out for assistance to NATO, an organization the current government hopes the country will eventually join.

Russia has about 1,500 troops stationed in Transdnestr, a landlocked separatist strip of Moldova that borders Ukraine.

Rescinding the transit rights for those troops creates a logistical problem for Russia and no solution was immediately apparent.

"As it now stands, we have to think about it, find a way. We shouldn't toss away Transdnestr and Moldova," said Vladimir Komoedov, chairman of the defense committee of the lower house of the Russian parliament, according to the Interfax news agency.

But he said Russia wouldn't consider retaliatory measures for the time being.

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