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Russia Defends Opening of Crimea Bridge Against U.S. Criticism

May 16, 2018



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Russia has defended the construction and opening of a road-and-rail bridge to Crimea this week amid international criticism.

In a ceremony broadcast live on state television Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin rode a truck to inaugurate the newly built bridge connecting mainland Russia to the annexed Crimean peninsula. The U.S. State Department condemned the opening of the $3.6 billion bridge, saying it violates Ukrainian integrity and impedes the navigation of ships into Ukraine from the Sea of Azov.

Related article: Putin Inaugurates Russia's Bridge to Crimea with Truck Ride

"As one could predict, Washington is not happy," the Russian Embassy in the U.S. wrote in a Facebook post.

“But Crimea is Russia. We shall not ask for anybody’s permission to build transport infrastructure for the sake of the population of Russian regions.”

In a tweet on Tuesday, Ukraine’s mission to the UN described the bridge as “a failed attempt to legitimize the Russian annexation of Crimea.”

Addressing reporters from the bridge on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Ukraine’s criticism was based on “despair and total helplessness,” the pro-Kremlin NTV news channel reported.

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