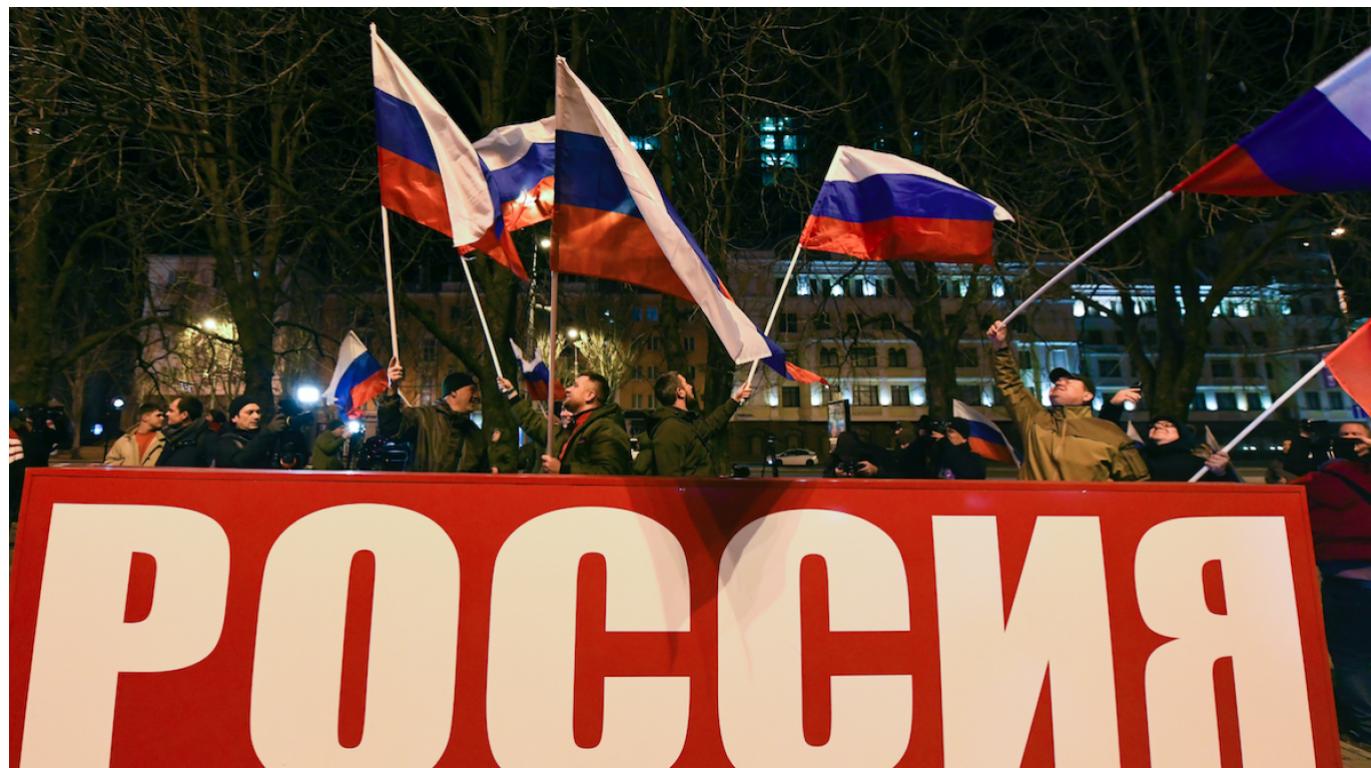


Putin Orders Russian Military to Act as 'Peacekeepers' in Ukraine Regions

By [AFP](#)

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Locals in Donetsk celebrated Russia's recognition of their independence. [Taisiya Vorontsova / TASS](#)

President Vladimir Putin on Monday ordered Russia's military to act as peacekeepers in two breakaway regions of Ukraine, just hours after he recognized them as independent.

In two official decrees, Putin instructed the defence ministry to assume "the function of peacekeeping" in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

Moscow provided no details or date for any deployment, with the order saying only that it "comes into force from the day it was signed."

Russia has in recent months moved tens of thousands of soldiers to regions near Ukraine's borders, with the West saying Moscow plans to use them for an attack at any moment.

Related article: [Putin Recognizes Independence of Pro-Russia Separatists in Ukraine](#)

Putin's recognition of the separatist republics as independent effectively buries a fragile peace agreement regulating the conflict in eastern Ukraine and opens the door for Russian military activities in the country.

In the same document, Putin also ordered his foreign ministry to "establish diplomatic relations" with the "republics."

Earlier on Monday, the Russian leader demanded that Kyiv halt all its military operations against pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine, or face more bloodshed.

Putin recognised the Donetsk and Lugansk separatist republics on Monday, despite Western countries repeatedly warning him not to and threatening Moscow with sanctions.

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