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U.S. Calls Off Biden-Putin Summit After Ukraine 'Invasion'

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The United States has called off high-level meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov following Moscow's recognition of Ukraine's two rebel regions, a move described in the West as laying the groundwork for an invasion.

French President Emmanuel Macron's office said earlier that Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden had agreed to the summit "in principle," with Biden agreeing on the condition that Russia does not invade Ukraine. The Kremlin however had called talk of a summit "premature."

This week, Putin signed military cooperation treaties with eastern Ukraine's breakaway republics and dispatched so-called "peacekeepers," while Russian senators greenlighted Putin's request to deploy troops there.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that a Biden-Putin summit "is certainly not in the plans," while allowing the prospect of diplomatic talks if the Russian leader "changes

course."

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The fast-moving events also threw a wrench into Lavrov's scheduled meeting with U.S. State Secretary Antony Blinken this Thursday, which was intended to pave the way for the Biden-Putin summit as world leaders seek to prevent Russia's incursion into Ukraine with a flurry of diplomacy.

"Now that we see the invasion is beginning and Russia has made clear its wholesale rejection of diplomacy, it does not make sense to go forward with that meeting at this time," Blinken said at a briefing.

Biden on Tuesday imposed new sanctions on Russia in response to "the beginning of a Russian invasion of Ukraine."

While announcing the new sanctions, he maintained that the U.S. and its allies "remain open to diplomacy if it is serious."

"I'm hoping diplomacy is still available."

Western governments leveled sanctions against Russia on Tuesday, including suspending the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, blocking the trading of government bonds, and issuing more asset freezes and travel bans on top oligarchs.

Putin critics have welcomed the West's move to hit Russia's richest and their family members, though the Kremlin has repeatedly said it is unfazed by the prospect of Western sanctions.

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