



Kremlin: After Referendums, New Territory Will Be Treated as Russia

Description

RUSSIA: The Kremlin says the security situation will drastically change four areas of Russian-held Ukraine after a vote on joining Russia is completed next week. Moscow appears ready to annex several regions of Ukraine and defend it as it would the rest of Russia.

On Friday, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov confirmed to reporters that the new areas will be treated as Russian territory. On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia would defend its territory “with all available means.” Later in the week, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned that any “encroachment on Russian territory is a crime.”

Russia organized referendums in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, and the Donbas republics, Donetsk and Luhansk. All four regions are expected to vote in favor of joining Russia. The elections will run through September 27.

The statements from Peskov and Medvedev suggest Moscow will welcome adding the Ukrainian territory. In 2014, the Donbas republics attempted to join Russia but were rebuffed by the Kremlin.

Western states have denounced the elections as a sham and stated they will not recognize the results. On Friday, NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg said the alliance would respond to the referendums with more aid to Kiev. “Our answer, NATO’s answer, is to step up support,” Stoltenberg told CNN.

He continued, “The best way to end this war is to strengthen the Ukrainians on the battlefield further so they can, at some stage, sit down and reach a solution which is acceptable for Ukraine and that preserves Ukraine as a sovereign, independent nation in Europe.”

Meanwhile, Medvedev believes Russia absorbing the territory will be a transformative event. The Donbas joining Russia would make the “geopolitical transformation of the world will become irreversible,” he said.

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