

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 17, 2014

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT  
ON UKRAINE

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

10:45 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning, everybody. In recent months, as the citizens of Ukraine have made their voices heard, we have been guided by a fundamental principle -- the future of Ukraine must be decided by the people of Ukraine. That means Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected, and international law must be upheld.

And so, Russia's decision to send troops into Crimea has rightly drawn global condemnation. From the start, the United States has mobilized the international community in support of Ukraine to isolate Russia for its actions and to reassure our allies and partners. We saw this international unity again over the weekend, when Russia stood alone in the U.N. Security Council defending its actions in Crimea. And as I told President Putin yesterday, the referendum in Crimea was a clear violation of Ukrainian constitutions and international law, and it will not be recognized by the international community.

Today, I'm announcing a series of measures that will continue to increase the cost on Russia and on those responsible for what is happening in Ukraine. First, as authorized by the executive order I signed two weeks ago, we are imposing sanctions on specific individuals responsible for undermining the sovereignty, territorial integrity and government of Ukraine. We're making it clear that there are consequences for their actions.

Second, I have signed a new executive order that expands the scope of our sanctions. As an initial step, I'm authorizing sanctions on Russian officials -- entities operating in the arms sector in Russia and individuals who provide material support to senior officials of the Russian government. And if Russia

continues to interfere in Ukraine, we stand ready to impose further sanctions.

Third, we're continuing our close consultations with our European partners, who today in Brussels moved ahead with their own sanctions against Russia. Tonight, Vice President Biden departs for Europe, where he will meet with the leaders of our NATO allies -- Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. And I'll be traveling to Europe next week. Our message will be clear. As NATO allies, we have a solemn commitment to our collective defense, and we will uphold this commitment.

Fourth, we'll continue to make clear to Russia that further provocations will achieve nothing except to further isolate Russia and diminish its place in the world. The international community will continue to stand together to oppose any violations of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, and continued Russian military intervention in Ukraine will only deepen Russia's diplomatic isolation and exact a greater toll on the Russian economy.

Going forward, we can calibrate our response based on whether Russia chooses to escalate or to de-escalate the situation. Now, I believe there's still a path to resolve this situation diplomatically in a way that addresses the interest of both Russia and Ukraine. That includes Russia pulling its forces in Crimea back to their bases, supporting the deployment of additional international monitors in Ukraine, and engaging in dialogue with the Ukrainian government, which has indicated its openness to pursuing constitutional reform as they move forward towards elections this spring.

But throughout this process, we're going to stand firm in our unwavering support for Ukraine. As I told Prime Minister Yatsenyuk last week, the United States stands with the people of Ukraine and their right to determine their own destiny. We're going to keep working with Congress and our international partners to offer Ukraine the economic support that it needs to weather this crisis and to improve the daily lives of the Ukrainian people.

And as we go forward, we'll continue to look at the range of ways we can help our Ukrainian friends achieve their universal rights and the security, prosperity and dignity that they deserve. Thanks very much. And Jay, I think, will be available for questions. Thank you.

END

10:49 A.M. EDT