

Moldova and Georgia Leaders to Visit U.S., Congressional Aides Say

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — The leaders of Georgia and Moldova are due to visit Washington in the next two weeks, congressional aides said, in what appears to be an effort to show U.S. support for Russia's neighbors amid the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine.

Congressional aides said that Georgian Prime Minister Irakly Garibashvili will be in Washington next week and Moldovan Prime Minister Iurie Leanca will visit during the first week of March.

"I cannot speak about how the invites were initiated, but Georgian and Moldovan PMs will be in Washington, the former during the last week of this month, and the latter in the first week in March," said a congressional aide, who requested anonymity in order to speak freely, on Wednesday.

White House officials declined to confirm the planned visits.

The visits would appear to be aimed at sending a message to Moscow that U.S. President Barack Obama's administration will stand by the two countries during the Ukraine crisis.

Obama and other Western leaders stepped up pressure on Ukraine's Russian-backed president, Viktor Yanukovich, on Wednesday after more than two dozen people were killed in the country's worst violence since independence from the Soviet Union.

The U.S. imposed visa bans on 20 senior Ukrainian government officials believed to be responsible for the violent crackdown. The European Union said it was preparing targeted sanctions against those responsible.

Street protests have raged for nearly three months since Yanukovich spurned a trade deal with the EU in favor of closer ties with Russia. Former Soviet republics Georgia and Moldova are also negotiating trade pacts with the EU.

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