

Moscow Allows Ukraine to Conduct Aerial Inspection of Russian Borders

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will allow Ukrainian military inspectors to carry out an emergency monitoring flight over Russian territory in response to allegations that recent military activity near Ukrainian borders poses a security threat.

"Although we do not have any obligations to Ukraine, we have decided to allow this inspection flight," Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov said Wednesday.

"We hope that our neighbors will see with their own eyes that the Russian armed forces are not involved in any kind of military activity along the Ukrainian border threatening Ukraine's security," Antonov said.

He added that Russia's Central and Western military districts had recently held snap checks of combat readiness, but that these exercises had ended on March 3 and all military units had returned to their bases on March 7.

The new authorities in Kiev requested the emergency monitoring flight over Russian regions bordering with Ukraine, citing fears that Russia could be preparing to invade its neighbor.

The allegations are part of a turbulent political crisis gripping Ukraine that has led to a standoff between Russia and the West over the fate of Crimea, an autonomous Ukrainian region with a narrow ethnic Russian majority.

Crimean authorities have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new central government in Kiev, which was installed after the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovich in late February.

Local officials announced last week that they intended for the peninsula to secede from Ukraine and become part of Russia.

A referendum on the issue has been set for March 16. Authorities in Kiev and international leaders have condemned the referendum as illegitimate.

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