

Transdnestr Asks to Be Included in Annexation Legislation

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The self-proclaimed Transdnestr republic has asked Russian legislators to consider making amendments to a draft bill that could lead to the annexation of the disputed area of Moldova.

A letter from Transdnestr's parliament speaker sent to State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin and seen by Vedomosti asked the United Russia party member to make provisions for Transdnestr's inclusion in upcoming legislation, drafted to facilitate the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region.

The bill, submitted by A Just Russia party deputies and slated for consideration by the Duma on March 21, would sanction the annexation of territories not governed by an "effective legislative authority" who have voted to join Russia. Transdnestr's parliament speaker Mikhail Burla has asked the law to be amended, however, as Moldovan authorities cannot explicitly be called "ineffective."

The annexation measure was drafted in advance of a referendum, held Sunday, in which the Crimea voted to secede from Ukraine and join Russia after pro-Western authorities took power in Kiev from Kremlin ally and ousted Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

On Monday, A Just Russia withdrew the bill as it did not want the legislation to interfere with the rapid annexation of Crimea under a different scheme. The party's Duma head said the legislation would be resubmitted later to allow Russia to take control of areas in critical situations.

In 2006, Transdnestr held a referendum in which 97.2 percent of voters cast their ballots for joining Russia. Earlier this year, the region's parliament approved a transition to Russian legislation and the official state language is Russian. Vedomosti reported that an estimated 200,000 Russian citizens live in the territory of about 500,000 people.

The area, between Ukraine and Moldova, declared independence from Moldova in 1990 following the breakup of the Soviet Union, but no United Nations member country has recognized it.

The statement from the Transdnestrian parliament also said the area's "difficult situation" would become worse if Moldova signed an association agreement with the European Union. In November Yanukovich's abandonment of such a deal for closer ties with Russia sparked anti-government street protests that ultimately led to his ouster in late February.

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