

Protesters Storm Kharkiv Theater Thinking It Was City Hall

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Pro-Russian protesters (L) gather outside the regional administration building as Interior Ministry personnel stand guard nearby in Kharkiv.

Pro-Russian demonstrators in eastern Ukraine mistook a theater for the city hall and stormed the wrong building, a local journalist said, citing the case as evidence that the protesters were not local.

Protesters who took over Kharkiv City Hall over the weekend first broke into the town's opera and ballet theater, but left upon finding a concert hall inside, journalist Vyacheslav Mavrichev said on his Facebook page.

Ukraine's Interior Minister Arsen Avakov has accused the Kremlin of orchestrating "separatist unrest" in Kharkiv and eastern cities Donetsk and Lugansk, while officials say that many pro-Russian protesters in east Ukraine may in fact be Russian.

On Monday, White House spokesman Jay Carney said there was "strong evidence" to suggest some of these demonstrators were paid and were not local residents."

Former Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko said protesters she saw in Donetsk had a military bearing and "did not look like residents" of the town, Ukraine's Segodnya.ua reported.

The administration building in Kharkiv had been cleared of "separatist" protesters who seized it over the weekend, Avakov said Monday.

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