

Poland Protests Russian Bikers' Plans for Patriotic Road Trip

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Leader of the motorcycling club Night Wolves Alexander Zaldostanov, who also goes by the nickname "Khirurg" (Surgeon), arrives at a news conference in Moscow Apr. 15.

WARSAW — Poland's prime minister spoke out Wednesday against plans by a Russian motorcycle club to ride through Poland on a journey to Berlin to mark the 70th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.

The Night Wolves, a nationalistic group loyal to Russian President Vladimir Putin, plan to retrace the westward path that Red Army soldiers took across eastern Europe as they fought Nazi troops.

Many Poles consider the ride a hostile act, and Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz called the bikers' plans a "provocation." She put the bikers on notice that Polish law would be applied if they disrupted security and public order.

The plans have been widely discussed in Polish media, and thousands of Poles joined a Facebook appeal calling for the bikers not to be allowed into the country. They need visas

to enter the European Union, which includes Germany and Poland.

In Germany, Interior Ministry spokesman Tobias Plate said the government was aware of the planned tour and "the responsible authorities will watch it very closely." German Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Sawsan Chebli said no such group has asked for a visa.

EU ties with Russia have soured recently over Moscow's role in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Putin has ridden with the bikers, and they have shown support for Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. They oppose the Ukrainian government, while Poland supports Kiev and its push for closer ties with the European Union.

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