

Putin Spokesman Avoids Questions on Reasons For Parliamentary Special Session

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dodged questions about whether President Vladimir Putin may ask Russia's parliament to authorize military involvement in Ukraine, saying that the president is free to exercise any of his rights, Russian media reported.

"The president may use any of his constitutional rights. That's his right," Peskov told a news conference Thursday, Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported.

Peskov was commenting on speculations that began circulating earlier in the day about preparations being made by the upper chamber of Russia's parliament, the Federation Council, to hold an emergency session.

The chamber's speaker, Valentina Matviyenko, told lawmakers to "not go far and remain in contact" during the summer break, adding that they may be summoned for an unscheduled session, Interfax reported.

The words reminded many of an emergency Federation Council session held last spring that gave Putin parliamentary approval for sending troops into Ukraine. The permission was withdrawn a few months later after Moscow annexed Crimea.

Parliamentary leaders denied speculation that something similar was being planned this time, saying that Matviyenko's appeal was prompted by expectations of a large number of bills coming in for review from the lower chamber, the State Duma, which must be acted upon by the Federation Council within 14 days of their approval by the Duma.

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