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<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/03/02/352843/obama-to-putin-pull-troops-from-crimea/>

Obama calls on Putin to pull Russian troops from restive Ukraine region

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Russia and the United States remain on a collision course over the restive Ukrainian region with Washington calling on Moscow to pull its troops in Crimea back to their bases.

US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin discussed the escalating crisis on telephone for 90 minutes on Saturday.

According to a statement issued by the White House, Obama expressed "his deep concern over Russia's clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity" and called on Putin to order withdrawal of Russian forces from Crimea back to their bases.

The US president also threatened that Moscow's refusal would "impact Russia's standing in the international community."

Obama warned that Moscow's action in the Black Sea region could lead to more political and economic isolation for Russia.

Putin, however, said that his country reserves the right to protect Russian interests and ethnic Russians in Ukraine.

"In the case of any further spread of violence to Eastern Ukraine and Crimea," a statement issued by Putin's office said, "Russia retains the right to protect its interests and the Russian-speaking population of those areas."

Earlier on Saturday, the Russian parliament approved Putin's request to deploy troops into Crimea.

Putin said that the mission is necessary to protect ethnic Russians and the military base in Crimea known as the Black Sea Fleet.

The Russian president has yet to decide on the troop deployment, but reports emerging from the region show two Russian anti-submarine warships have appeared off the Ukraine coast.

Meanwhile, US Senator Bob Corker called for immediate sanctions against Russia for any potential military intervention in Ukraine.

"Vladimir Putin is seizing a neighboring territory — again — so President Obama must lead a meaningful, unified response," Corker said in a statement.

The Ukrainian army was put on a combat alert as the country's acting President Oleksandr Turchynov said on Saturday that any Russia's military intervention will lead to a war in the crisis-hit country.