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## Russia Adds Troops, Ukraine Insists They Won't Give Up Crimea

By Jason Ditz

March 8, 2014

New Russian ships have added reinforcements to their positions in the Crimea, unloading some 200 military vehicles and bringing the estimated number of troops there around the limit under treaty of 25,000.



The deployments come just a week before the planned Crimean referendum on secession from the Ukraine. Russia is backing the referendum, and Russian parliament has expressed support for annexing Crimea should the voters demand it.

The Ukraine interim government, itself only installed a couple of weeks ago, has condemned the referendum as an “inexcusable provocation,” and insists that they will never give up control of the Crimea, no matter what the Crimeans themselves say.

Ultimately, they may not have a choice. Rhetoric of invasion aside, the Russian deployment has effectively precluded Ukraine’s much smaller military, deeply divided by recent regime change, trying to reconquer the Crimea militarily. Many have already defected to Crimea’s own fledgling military, and once the referendum passes, which is all but assured by the ethnic Russian majority in the peninsula, it will be a fait accompli.