

Beat: Politics

OBAMA CALLS PUTIN ON EVE OF UKRAINE PEACE TALK

AGGRESSION MUST STOP

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USPA NEWS - President Obama called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to agree to a diplomatic solution to the escalating Ukrainian conflict Tuesday, telling Putin in a phone call that "the costs for Russia will rise" if its aggression continues.

In a separate phone call with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Obama pledged continuing financial assistance to the Eastern European country, the White House said.

The round of telephone diplomacy comes the day before a round of talks continues in Minsk, Belarus "" a follow-up to an agreement reached there last September. NATO countries, led by Germany, France and the United States, are pressuring Russia to withdraw troops and armaments from separatist-controlled territories in eastern Ukraine.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Obama wants Putin to live up to the previous agreement.

"We've been particularly disappointed by the fact that the Russians have failed on just about every measure to live up to the commitments that they made in those talks," Earnest said Tuesday.

He said Russia has refused to live up to commitments to withdraw troops and weapons from Ukraine, to allow international monitoring of the border, to return control of Ukrainian territory and to free hostages.

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