

NATO's "Foreign Legions" Operating in East Ukraine. Vladimir Putin

Meeting with Students at the Mining University

By [Pres. Vladimir Putin](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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Excerpts from transcript of meeting with students at the Mining University

Highlights

Regrettably, the government in Kiev has refused to take the road of a peaceful settlement and does not want to resolve the problem through political means. First they used the law enforcement agencies, then the security services, and then the army. Later, when they ran up against resistance, they suspended military operations, but sadly, they only used the temporary peace to regroup and then start their operations again. They are pursuing these operations again now. Thousands of people have already been killed. This is certainly a real tragedy.

We often speak of the 'Ukrainian army', but who is doing the fighting there in reality? Yes, in part it is official armed forces units, but a substantial part of those doing the fighting come from the so-called volunteer nationalist battalions. Essentially, this is not an army but is a foreign legion, in this particular case, a NATO foreign legion, which is not pursuing Ukraine's national interests of course. They have completely different goals, related to achieving their geopolitical aim of containing Russia, and this is absolutely not in the Ukrainian people's national interests.

Unfortunately though, we have the situation we see before us now. We need to help the people there. Incidentally, many people are trying to get out of being called up for duty. Some are trying to come here to Russia and wait things out a while here, and they are right to do this because there, they are simply being sent as cannon fodder to face the bullets. The problem is though, that under the new law, Ukrainian citizens cannot spend more than 30 days at a time in Russia. So they go back home and get caught and sent off again to face the bullets. We will therefore probably make some changes. Within the law's provisions, we could increase the amount of time certain categories of people, above all people of conscript age, can stay in Russia.

PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA VLADIMIR PUTIN: Good afternoon, congratulations on yesterday's holiday, the day we traditionally celebrate as Students Day.

It was a pleasure to be shown around your university. You have plenty to be proud of here of course. I think that you all see and understand this for yourselves. The level of your professors and teachers, the university's equipment, and the whole way the teaching process is organised are all things you can be proud of.

It is good to see that we have universities of this level in the engineering field. This is particularly important for Russia. It is important in any country of course, but especially for Russia with its immense territory and mineral resources. This is excellent to see and I congratulate you on this.

RESPONSE: Thank you.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: I thought today was an ordinary day, but you are still celebrating the holiday.

FIRST VICE-RECTOR OF THE MINING UNIVERSITY NATALIA PASHKEVICH: The latest round of exams has just ended and the break has begun. The postgraduates have come back from their internships. The students have just finished their exams and so they have reasons to celebrate.

Today, the board of trustees and the FosAgro Company handed over a new student dormitory building to us.

RECTOR OF THE MINING UNIVERSITY VLADIMIR LITVINENKO: What's more, a programme totalling nearly 800 million rubles provided by companies taking an active part in its implementation has been approved for this year.

Last year, we took possession of 50,000 square metres, the construction of which was funded by extra-budgetary sources, by companies. For every ruble spent, we earn 1.2 rubles for the budget.

Many postgraduates have returned from internships and presented their reports today.

NATALIA PASHKEVICH: They were in Germany, France and Poland.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: You have a big programme of work.

NATALIA PASHKEVICH: Yes, we do. We are working with the Finns on a double-diploma programme, and with the French, the Germans, and the Austrians.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: The rector spoke about this. You are working in the interests of Russian companies, and in foreign companies' interests too?

NATALIA PASHKEVICH: In foreign companies' interest too. The Austrians, French and Canadians have all taken on our graduates.

VLADIMIR LITVINENKO: But they do come back to Russia, Mr President. For example, we have graduates who are going to Norway and returning home again.

NATALIA PASHKEVICH: Many of our graduates are working in companies' representative offices here in Russia.

VLADIMIR LITVINENKO: These ones were in Houston, for example.

RESPONSE: We were happy to come back.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Where were you, at what institution?

RESPONSE: At Houston College of Technology. We did a general internship there, attended lectures and visited companies so as to pass on the knowledge to our own students, improve our training and maybe bring back some innovations and latest developments.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: This should continue because our education system needs to be an organic part of the global education system. This is the only way to maintain our level, get a sense of what our partners are doing, develop the main areas ourselves and exchange information. This is all very important and should continue. We will do this of course.

<...>

QUESTION: Mr President, Donetsk National Technical University has been the Mining University's partner for many years now. We have friends there, students who are taking part in our annual international forum and competition, *Problems of Mineral Resource Use*. Sadly, because of the events in Ukraine, they have hardly been able to study of late.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Classes have stopped there?

RESPONSE: When there is bombing, the classes get cancelled, then they start again, but there is not really any proper teaching process going on there at the moment. The students in Donetsk place their hopes on your personal help and we and the Donetsk students all want to thank you for the great attention you have been giving these matters. Would you be able to help the students in Donetsk? Perhaps it's possible to do something.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: This is a very painful issue you have brought up here, one that concerns the serious and tragic events in Ukraine. Essentially, a civil war is underway there. I think that many in Ukraine understand this very well now.

Regrettably, the government in Kiev has refused to take the road of a peaceful settlement and does not want to resolve the problem through political means. First they used the law enforcement agencies, then the security services, and then the army. Later, when they ran up against resistance, they suspended military operations, but sadly, they only used the temporary peace to regroup and then start their operations again. They are pursuing these operations again now. Thousands of people have already been killed. This is certainly a real tragedy.

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could increase the amount of time certain categories of people, above all people of conscript age, can stay in Russia.

Regarding your question, of course we need to help the students. We would have to ask the rector about the possibilities, but you could make use of distance learning technology, invite them here for internships, and simply come up with a support system for them.

VLADIMIR LITVINENKO: We would be able to take up to 1,000 students here for six months or a year at least, but there would be issues to sort out with the Ministry and the Government, so close coordination would be needed.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: I will definitely talk to them.

VLADIMIR LITVINENKO: I know that the South Russian State Polytechnic University in Novocherkassk could take students and has the needed dormitory facilities and so forth. We could take them at least temporarily.

VLADIMIR PUTIN: Last year, we allocated... (*Addressing Presidential Aide Andrei Fursenko*) How many places in our universities did we allocate to students from Ukraine last year? We allocated additional budget-subsidised places in 18 Russian universities. Your partners from the Donetsk institute could of course get support from your university, one of our country's top universities. Let's think about how to go about it. We do need to help the students.

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