

# *U.S. Secretary of State Says Russia Could Be Thrown Out of G-8*

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Washington, March 3 (RHC)-- U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry says Russia could be ousted from the Group of Eight (G-8) over its deployment of troops in the restive Ukrainian region, warning that Moscow will suffer a loss of trade and investment if it does not retreat.

In an interview with a U.S. news network on Sunday, Kerry bluntly warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that "he is not going to have a Sochi G-8, he may not even remain in the G-8 if this continues," referring to a planned G-8 summit in Russia in June. And Washington's top diplomat said that Putin "may find himself with asset freezes, on Russian business. American business may pull back, there may be a further tumble of the ruble."

In a comment that many observers noted was hypocritical, Kerry said: "You just don't in the 21st Century behave in 19th Century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped-up pretext."

The U.S. and Russia are on a collision course over Ukraine with Washington calling on Moscow to pull its troops in Crimea back to their bases. On Saturday, U.S. President Barack Obama called Russia's build-up of its forces in Crimea a "violation of Ukrainian sovereignty." In response, Putin told his U.S.

counterpart that his country reserves the right to protect Russian interests and ethnic Russians in Ukraine.

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.

Recently, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland disclosed that Washington has "invested" about \$5 billion in "promoting democracy" in Ukraine over the past two decades.

In early February, Nuland visited Ukraine and held meetings with anti-Kremlin politicians who organized anti-government protests that led to the ouster of Ukraine's democratically-elected president, Viktor Yanukovich.

In a recent statement, Natalia Vitrenko, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, said: "Washington and Brussels ... used a Nazi coup, carried out by insurgents, terrorists and politicians of Euromaidan to serve the geopolitical interests of the West."

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