

Diplomatic Panorama

Comprehensive coverage of foreign policy activity in the former Soviet Union

Published by Interfax Group



THURSDAY, September 4, 2014

Reports by our diplomatic correspondents A.Baranovsky, O.Golovanova, S.Popov and others

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Peskov: Putin's plan for Ukraine amounts to proposals on pressing measures | 2 |
| No Russian troops in Ukraine - Peskov after Obama's statement | 2 |
| "War party" in Ukraine aspires to continue bloodshed, undermines Poroshenko's positions - Lavrov | 2 |
| Lavrov hopes Kyrgyzstan to integrate to Customs Union soon | 3 |
| Moscow expects reaction from Kyiv, militia to Putin's plan on peace settlement in Ukraine - Lavrov | 3 |
| Lavrov: Obama's remark on Russia-NATO Founding Act incorrect | 4 |
| U.S. supports 'war party' in Kyiv - Lavrov | 4 |
| Putin's plan should be discussed with all parties to Ukraine conflict - OSCE PA president | 4 |
| Ukraine plans to renounce non-aligned status aim to disrupt political dialogue - Lavrov | 5 |
| Lavrov expects contact group of Ukraine meeting in Minsk to use Putin's proposals to settle conflict | 6 |
| Russia willing to work toward Ukraine conflict de-escalation together with OSCE - Lavrov | 6 |
| Russian Foreign Ministry envoy insists on probe into journalist deaths in Ukraine | 7 |
| Moscow doubts French reputation of reliable partner amid Mistral deal situation | 7 |
| PACE agrees to hold Presidential Committee meeting in Moscow - Duma chairman | 8 |
| CoE Sec Gen hopes Putin peace plan creates positive dynamic in Ukrainian crisis settlement | 8 |
| OSCE calls on Russian parliamentarians to cooperate to settle Ukraine crisis | 9 |
| NATO countries welcome steps on settlement in Ukraine | 10 |
| Estonia, U.S. see eye to eye on security - U.S. president, Estonian PM | 10 |
| Estonia supports Obama's proposal to set up Air Force training center near Tallinn | 11 |

Interfax Russia & CIS Diplomatic Panorama

© 2014 by Interfax Ltd.
2, Pervaya Tverskaya-Yamskaya, Moscow, Russia
Tel: +7 (499) 250-98-40, fax: +7 (499) 250-97-27,
e-mail: info@interfax.ru
Internet: www.interfax.com

Reproduction without permission of the copyright holder is strictly prohibited. Federal copyright law prohibits unauthorized reproduction by any means and imposes fines of up to \$ 20 000 for violations

Peskov: Putin's plan for Ukraine amounts to proposals on pressing measures

GORNO-ALTAISK. Sept 3 (Interfax) - Putin's plan for a settlement in Ukraine proposed by the Russian president on Wednesday amounts only to proposals on pressing measures, presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov has said.

"This is not an exhaustive plan. This is a proposal of pressing measures while all the rest is the subject of further talks," Peskov said to Interfax, answering a question about the absence of questions relating to the status of territories in south-eastern Ukraine from the plan.

He stressed that the main purpose of the measures proposed by the Russian president is to stop the bloodshed and stabilize the situation in southeastern Ukraine.

"This is not a dogma which someone is insisting on and which is being imposed on someone. It can be used as a basis in full or in part. The main thing is that the sides in the conflict stop the fighting as soon as possible and get down to talks," Peskov said.

The press secretary said that Putin's plan was announced and a response to it should follow. "It was announced to the whole world," Peskov said, remarking that now the Kremlin is waiting for a response.

No Russian troops in Ukraine - Peskov after Obama's statement

MOSCOW. Sept 3 (Interfax) - Top Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has refuted U.S. President Barack Obama's statement that there are Russian troops on Ukrainian territory.

"We have stated many times that there are no Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine. And while President Obama is saying that there are no doubts about it, officials from the U.S. State Department simultaneously with their president are saying that the U.S. does not have any evidence of the presence of the Russian military in the territory of Ukraine. This situation stresses the reluctance to rely on facts," Peskov said to the Russian News Service.

"It is simply an obsession to ascribe Russia a destructive role in the development of the Ukrainian crisis with which we categorically disagree," he said.

Earlier during a visit to Tallinn Obama said that "Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine are not a humanitarian or peacekeeping mission." "They are Russian combat forces with Russian weapons in Russian tanks," he said. "These are the facts that can be proved," and "they cannot be questioned," he said at a press conference.

"War party" in Ukraine aspires to continue bloodshed, undermines Poroshenko's positions - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Opponents of a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine cast doubt on the legitimacy of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's actions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a news conference in Moscow.

"Those who are taking the path of war now by supporting violent radical elements in Kyiv, they take a huge responsibility, including not only for the continuing bloodshed but as to [what are]

essentially attempts to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the actions of the current Ukrainian president," Lavrov said.

In particular, Right Sector radical group leader Dmytro Yarosh statement that "if the president cannot achieve military victory, Right Sector militants will do so without President Poroshenko" can serve as an example, Lavrov said.

"I hope that after all this will be realized in Washington and other capitals, which are currently virtually intoxicated with anti-Russian rhetoric," Lavrov said.

Lavrov hopes Kyrgyzstan to integrate to Customs Union soon

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - It is hoped that documents necessary for Kyrgyzstan's integration to the Customs Union and Eurasian economic space will be signed soon, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"A special fund is being created and the mechanism of financing the so-called road map for carrying out procedures required in the framework of the Kyrgyz economy is being determined. These agreements are close to completion and I hope they will be signed soon," Lavrov said at a news conference on Thursday following talks with his Kyrgyz counterpart Erlan Abdyldaev.

The Kyrgyz government has just approved a major set of documents necessary for the country to join the Customs Union and Eurasian Economic Union, Lavrov said.

"We welcome this approach and, at the same time, the agreement of two Russian-Kyrgyz documents, which will provide certain documents for the Kyrgyz economy in order to harmonize it in the Eurasian space, is close to an end," the Russian minister said.

Lavrov said he thanked his Kyrgyz counterpart for the invitation to come to Kyrgyzstan on yet another visit.

Kyrgyzstan intends to increase the potential of cooperation with Russia in future, Abdyldaev said.

Moscow expects reaction from Kyiv, militia to Putin's plan on peace settlement in Ukraine - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Moscow expects reaction from Kyiv and the militia on Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposals to de-escalate the conflict in Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a news conference following talks with his Kyrgyz counterpart.

"We expect that the reaction from official Kyiv and militia will come. We have done, are doing and will do everything depending on us in order for the proposals on beginning dialogue to materialize, starting with the main task - a ceasefire," Lavrov told Interfax.

"We will, of course, also be ready to listen to some additional proposals from the members of the Contact Group in the hope that we will eventually work out something in common. As the first step, we will insist on a ceasefire: this is the most important thing now," the minister said.

"This is not the first time - as soon as a ray of hope emerges for switching the situation from forceful resistance to the political settlement sector, the so-called 'war party' becomes active at once," Lavrov also said.

Lavrov: Obama's remark on Russia-NATO Founding Act incorrect

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - U.S. President Barack Obama's remark that the 1997 Russia-NATO Founding Act may be amended is not correct politically, as this document was adopted by all members of the Russia-NATO Council and therefore can only be amended collectively, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"As regards the declaration on the intention to make amendments to the Russia-NATO Founding Act, I venture to remind you that this document was developed by all the countries that make up the Russia-NATO Council, and this document can only be amended collectively," Lavrov said at a press conference following negotiations with Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldayev.

"And saying that one country has decided to amend a collective document signed by 28 countries is perhaps not quite correct either in legal or political terms," Lavrov said.

"It is possible to unilaterally withdraw from it, but this will concern only a country that makes such a decision for itself," he added.

U.S. supports 'war party' in Kyiv - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - The 'war party' in Kyiv enjoys active support from the United States, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"An outbreak of anti-Russian rhetoric that we are witnessing right at the moment when most active efforts are being made to achieve a political settlement shows only that the 'war party' in Kyiv enjoys active support from the outside, in this particular case from the U.S. side," Lavrov said following negotiations with the Kyrgyz foreign minister on Thursday.

Putin's plan should be discussed with all parties to Ukraine conflict - OSCE PA president

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly believes it would be helpful to discuss a plan for settling the crisis in eastern Ukraine proposed by Russian President Vladimir Putin with all parties to the conflict, says OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva.

Speaking to journalists following a closed meeting with Russian Federation Council Chair Valentina Matviyenko on Thursday, Kanerva said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had informed him of Putin's plan earlier this morning, and it would be helpful and constructive to discuss this plan with other parties to the conflict in Ukraine.

At the same time, the OSCE has a lot of its own initiatives, including a road map for settling the conflict, he said.

He welcomed what he sees as a constructive approach demonstrated by Putin but said the OSCE PA certainly cannot rely solely on one plan in its work.

The problem of Ukraine has a lot of aspects, and it would be helpful to discuss all these peace initiatives toward resolving the conflict so as to develop joint proposals, Kanerva said.

Putin aired his plan for resolving the Ukraine crisis on Wednesday.

Ukraine plans to renounce non-aligned status aim to disrupt political dialogue - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - The Kyiv authorities' intention to revise Ukraine's non-aligned status derails the efforts toward peacefully settling the conflict in the southeastern part of the country, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"Right at the moment while approaches are being explored to start resolving the concrete problem between Kyiv and the militias, the Kyiv authorities aired the demand on discarding the non-aligned status and starting accession to NATO. This is a sure attempt to derail all efforts aimed at arranging a dialogue with the aim of ensuring national security," Lavrov said at a meeting with the Council of Europe secretary general on Thursday.

The Russian minister urged other countries to stop provoking such approaches and continue work toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

"It is necessary to curb such attempts, stop provoking such approaches from abroad, and work together toward the same goal, that is, ensure national unity in Ukraine," Lavrov said.

At the same time, Lavrov stressed that Russia wants the Ukrainian people to win in this conflict, while some Western countries wish for a NATO victory.

"Some of our Western partners, including the most influential United States, want NATO to win and to have a situation in which America dictates its will to everyone. This exceptionalist philosophy that President Obama has repeatedly declared won't make and already hasn't made any good," he said.

Ukraine declared a course toward Euro-Atlantic integration along with closer ties with the European Union in 2005, immediately after President Viktor Yushchenko came to power. The NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008 was a milestone in Ukraine's NATO membership drive, as it expected to be granted a Membership Action Plan at it. However, the NATO members decided not to grant this plan to Ukraine, arguing that its population was not properly prepared for this step.

In 2010, the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill entitled On the Principles of Domestic and Foreign Policies, which was submitted to the parliament by then-President Viktor Yanukovich. The document declared the non-bloc status of Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic integration policies were removed from it.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk had said on August 29 that the Cabinet submitted legislation on renouncing Ukraine's non-aligned status to the parliament. "In line with the National Security and Defense Council decision, the Ukrainian government submitted legislation to the parliament on renouncing the Ukrainian state's non-aligned status and resuming Ukraine's course toward NATO membership," he said.

The adoption of the bill would mean that Ukraine would be forbidden to become a member of either the Customs Union or the Eurasian Union, he said.

The Ukrainian Cabinet of ministers approved a bill on renouncing Ukraine's non-aligned status and resuming a course toward Euro-Atlantic integration on Wednesday, and now the Verkhonva Rada is supposed to pass the legislation.

"This legislation should be passed by the parliament," Yatsenyuk said at a government session on Wednesday.

Lavrov expects contact group of Ukraine meeting in Minsk to use Putin's proposals to settle conflict

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Moscow expects that Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposals on settling the conflict in Ukraine will be used during a session of the contact group for Ukraine in Minsk on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

"We hope that the conflicting parties will use these ideas and try to reach an agreement during the contact group session," Lavrov said at a meeting with Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland in Moscow on Thursday.

Moscow is trying to make its contribution to efforts to start a dialogue between Kyiv and the southeastern part of Ukraine, Lavrov said. "The Council of Europe can and should play a constructive role at this difficult time," he said.

Lavrov insisted that decisions made by the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the UN Security Council should be implemented fully. "This concerns investigations into all crimes and all incidents that have taken place on Maidan [in Kyiv], the tragedy in Odesa, the Boeing crash, a ceasefire, and the normalization of dialogue," he said.

The Council of Europe's and the OSCE's principles have lacked respect and fallen victim to double standards as of late, he said.

"As long as we don't abandon attempts to perpetuate the dividing lines in Europe, we will face challenges like the current one from time to time," he said.

Jagland said in response that the conflict in Ukraine is a very important challenge to all European institutions, including the Council of Europe, as they were founded following WWII and the Statute of the Council of Europe says that the member-states have to prevent armed conflicts using peaceful methods.

The Council of Europe attaches special significance to the protection of the rights of the people who suffer in the Ukrainian conflict, as their rights guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights have been systematically violated, he said.

Lavrov agreed that the European institutions are experiencing a crisis now. "We have a crisis of European institutions. We are convinced that high principles that were put in the foundation of the OSCE and the Council of Europe are not fully respected and fall victim to double standards," he said.

Russia willing to work toward Ukraine conflict de-escalation together with OSCE - Lavrov

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Moscow is ready to take practical steps toward the de-escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in line with a plan Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed on Wednesday, says Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

"We hope these calls will be heard, especially by Kyiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk. We are ready to ensure practical steps toward de-escalation together with the OSCE," Lavrov said in opening a meeting with Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva on Thursday.

Russian Foreign Ministry envoy insists on probe into journalist deaths in Ukraine

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Russia insists on an efficient investigation into the circumstances of photojournalist Andrei Stenin's death and other crimes against journalists and civilians in Ukraine, says Russian Foreign Ministry Human Rights Commissioner Konstantin Dolgov.

"A full-scale investigation should be conducted, and this concerns not only Rossiya Segodnya international news agency photojournalist Andrei Stenin's death but also all other crimes, including the burning of people in Odesa and the shootings in Mariupol on May 9. The Ukrainian authorities should take all the necessary measures themselves, including the punishment of those guilty," Dolgov said in an interview published in the Thursday issue of Izvestia.

These investigations should be conducted under efficient control by international institutions, he said.

"However, we don't see the political will in Kyiv so far," he said.

Russia will not allow "the investigation to be taken into shadows," Dolgov said.

"We will be using political and diplomatic methods, including statements in international formats. This is Russia's position at the highest level," he added.

The international community, primarily the U.S. and the EU supporting Ukraine, should prompt Kyiv to conduct such an investigation, he said.

Dolgov suggested that the U.S. position looks especially strange now, considering that two U.S. journalists were recently killed by Islamic State terrorists in Iraq, and therefore, he said, the tragedy of Stenin's and other journalists' deaths in Ukraine should be close and understandable to the Americans.

Moscow doubts French reputation of reliable partner amid Mistral deal situation

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - The halted delivery of Mistral-class helicopter carriers to Russia casts doubt on the reputation of Paris as a reliable partner, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"The reputation of France as a reliable partner which honors its contract commitments has been sacrificed to U.S. political ambitions. Where have the times when Paris refused to yield to the U.S. pressure, for instance, in the issue of Iraq, gone?" ministry deputy spokesperson Maria Zakharova wrote on Facebook.

French President Francois Hollande announced the halt of the delivery of the first Mistral-class helicopter carrier to Russia on Wednesday. The statement was made after Hollande had met with the French Defense Committee and concluded that conditions "were not right" for the delivery of the first helicopter carrier to Russia.

A source in the NATO administration told Interfax on the same day that the alliance had nothing to do with the French president's decision not to deliver the Mistral-class ship to Russia. He said it was a sovereign decision of a member country of the organization.

The source added that certain NATO alliance members had told France it was the wrong time to supply such weapons to Russia but NATO as a whole did not pressure Paris.

The Russian government's Military Industrial Commission Deputy Chairman Oleg Bochkarev told Interfax-AVN on Thursday, Russia has not received any documents from France regarding a possible repeal of the contract for the delivery of Mistral-class helicopter carriers to the Russian Navy.

PACE agrees to hold Presidential Committee meeting in Moscow - Duma chairman

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - The leadership of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has agreed to hold a PACE Presidential Committee meeting in Moscow, Russian State Duma Chairman Sergei Naryshkin said.

"I proposed to our partners from the Assembly's Presidential Committee [in Paris earlier this week] that this communication and this dialogue be continued and that another such meeting be held here, in Moscow. Our partners agreed to this proposal," Naryshkin said while meeting with Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland at the Duma on Thursday.

The parties are currently choosing a date convenient for such a meeting, he said.

Speaking about his recent participation in a meeting of the PACE Presidential Committee in Paris, Naryshkin said this was helpful, even though it "revealed different approaches and different judgments on a number of issues."

CoE Sec Gen hopes Putin peace plan creates positive dynamic in Ukrainian crisis settlement

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland positively views Russian President Vladimir Putin's initiative for settling the crisis in eastern Ukraine but says it should be supported with concrete steps.

Jagland said in Moscow on Thursday answering a question from Interfax it was good the initiative had been made and added they should hope it could lead to something.

It is very important to maintain positive dynamics in the fulfillment of such proposals and to make one positive step after another under such circumstances, he stressed.

A prisoner swap could be one of these positive steps, the Council of Europe secretary general stated.

Jagland said they had seen conflicts of the Ukrainian kind before in which radicalized elements on both sides did not want to make positive progress and tried to undermine any initiative.

The Council of Europe secretary general called for giving comprehensive support to the civilian population harmed by the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Jagland noted that the Ukrainian crisis had gone too far and it must be stopped immediately.

Putin presented his plan for the Ukrainian crisis resolution on Wednesday.

"The first thing is to stop active offensive operations by the armed forces and armed formations of militia of south-eastern Ukraine in the direction of Donetsk and Luhansk," Putin told reporters.

"The second thing is to withdraw armed subdivisions of Ukrainian law enforcers to a distance, ruling out the possibility of artillery and all multiple launch system strikes on settlements," the Russian president said.

"The third thing is to foresee carrying out comprehensive and objective international control with regard to compliance with ceasefire conditions and monitoring the situation created this way in the security sector," Putin said.

"The fourth thing is to rule out the application of combat aircraft against civilians and settlements in the conflict zone. Then to organize the exchange of persons kept forcibly under the 'all for all' formula, without any preliminary conditions," the Russian president said.

"The sixth thing is to open humanitarian corridors to move refugees and deliver humanitarian cargo to cities and other Donbas settlements - the Donetsk and Luhansk regions," he said.

"And finally, the seventh thing is to ensure the possibility of sending damage repair brigades to Donbas settlements to restore social and vital infrastructure facilities and to help them," Putin said.

The Kyiv authorities and representatives of south-eastern Ukraine could reach and affirm final agreements during the contact group meeting scheduled for September 5, 2014, the Russian president said.

OSCE calls on Russian parliamentarians to cooperate to settle Ukraine crisis

MOSCOW. Sept 4 (Interfax) - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly President Ilkka Kanerva has called on Russian parliamentarians to cooperate with the OSCE PA to promote a political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine.

Meeting with Russian Federation Council Chair Valentina Matviyenko on Thursday, Kanerva said the situation surrounding Ukraine is continuing to worsen, and the OSCE PA cannot be indifferent to this.

Kanerva said he implied efforts toward the conflict's de-escalation and the arrangement of a sustainable political dialogue, which is extremely important now, taking into account the worsening humanitarian situation in the region.

The OSCE PA is urging Russia to display its commitment to OSCE principles, while the organization is seeking to perform its role as a mediator in settling the Ukraine crisis, so as to stop the conflict from spreading and prevent its destructive consequences together, he said.

Matviyenko responded that the OSCE in general plays a positive role in the Ukraine crisis.

"The main issue today is a ceasefire, and all efforts should be focused on this so as to start a negotiating process then. We expect the OSCE to promote the improvement of a humanitarian situation in southeastern Ukraine. We also support the work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and hope it will be impartial in its judgments about the events," she said.

Matviyenko said she implied OSCE's impartial judgments about war crimes committed by the Ukrainian armed forces and mass human rights abuses and shootings on Maidan and in Mariupol and the burning of civilians in Odesa.

Russia sees the OSCE's role in conducting constitutional reform in Ukraine to ensure the legitimate rights of the people living in the southeastern part of the country, Matviyenko said. "Without this, it is difficult to expect an internal Ukrainian settlement. The rights of Russian Orthodox Church believers are massively infringed upon in Ukraine today, priests are being badly harassed, and there have been instances of murders, and the Ukrainian authorities are obstructing the work of Russian media outlets in any way they can and kill Russian journalists. The last case is the killing of Russian journalist Andrei Stenin," Matviyenko said.

Russia also expects the OSCE mission to contribute to the international investigation into the MH17 crash in Ukraine, Matviyenko said. "We expect an open and impartial investigation. Im-

mediately after the Boeing crash, there were unfounded accusations addressed to the militia and Russia," she said.

"There is the impression that someone is deliberately dragging out the investigation so as not to name those who are truly responsible for this disaster," Matviyenko said.

NATO countries welcome steps on settlement in Ukraine

NEWPORT, Wales. Sept 3 (Interfax) - NATO countries expect a political solution for the Ukrainian crisis to be found, a high-level NATO official said on Wednesday when commenting on the plan of Russian President Vladimir Putin on settlement in Ukraine.

NATO welcomes any attempts of political resolution of the Ukrainian crisis but first certain steps are needed to de-escalate, the NATO high-level official said at a briefing in the NATO summit press office in Newport.

Russia should withdraw its servicemen from Ukraine and troops concentrated near the Ukrainian border, stop supporting separatists and cease the flow of arms and militants from its territory to Ukraine, the official said.

Estonia, U.S. see eye to eye on security - U.S. president, Estonian PM

TALLINN. Sept 3 (Interfax) - U.S. President Barack Obama and Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Roivas spoke of the similarity of the approaches of their countries to security issues at a meeting in Tallinn on Wednesday, Interfax was told at the press service of the Estonian government.

Obama confirmed his country's commitment to defending its NATO allies.

He expressed gratitude to Estonia for its attitude to national defense and international security and named it an example to other allies for its contribution to defense spending.

Estonia is one of the few NATO countries to fulfil the alliance's criteria of spending no less than 2% of the GDP on defense.

Prime Minister Roivas welcomed the decision to set up an air force training center of the United States, Baltic and Nordic countries in Amari near Tallinn.

"This is an important decision for our state defense, and it increases the presence of our allies in Estonia," Roivas said.

"U.S. support for our region is extremely important and deserves gratitude, especially in the current unpredictable security situation," he said.

The two sides also discussed energy security issues and possibilities of cooperation in this sphere between the U.S. and Europe.

They also contemplated the future of NATO and the upcoming summit of the alliance in Wales.

Estonia supports Obama's proposal to set up Air Force training center near Tallinn

TALLINN. Sept 3 (Interfax) - Estonia supports U.S. President Barack Obama's proposal to set up an Air Force training center at Amari air base near Tallinn.

"It is very important that the United States is constantly contributing directly to in the security of our region and intends to supplement this, for example, with air defense," Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet told Interfax through the press service of his ministry.

"Amari air base is quite a suitable place," he said commenting on the proposals made by Obama in Tallinn on Wednesday to reinforce regional air forces and set up a training center for that in Amari.

He said that the U.S. is "a very close ally" for Estonia and Obama's visit ahead of the NATO summit in Wales proves that. "The same as the presence of the U.S. military in Estonia," he added.

"Security issues are now most important but Estonia has arranged cooperation with the United States perfectly in several other spheres too - the protection of human rights, electronic government, the development of democracy in the world and also cyber security," Paet said.

###