

## PUTIN LOOKS TO BOOST SECURITY OVER ALLEGED UKRAINE RAIDS

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday moved to ramp up security on the annexed Crimea peninsula after accusing Ukraine of attempting armed incursions into the disputed region, allegations denied fiercely by Kiev.

Russia's FSB security service on Wednesday said it had earlier this week thwarted "terrorist attacks" in Crimea by Ukrainian military intelligence and beaten back armed assaults. The allegations have ratcheted up tensions in a feud sparked by Moscow's 2014 seizure of the Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine and prompted fears of possible wider conflict.

Putin held a meeting with his security chiefs to discuss "additional measures for ensuring security for citizens and essential infrastructure in Crimea," the Kremlin said in a statement. "Scenarios were carefully considered for anti-terrorist security measures at the land border, in the waters and in the airspace of Crimea," it said.

The FSB security service said Wednesday that one of its officers was killed in armed clashes while arresting "terrorists" on the night of August 6-7, while a Russian soldier died in a firefight with "sabotage-terrorist" groups sent by the Ukrainian military on August 8.

'Demand new concessions?'

An irate Putin then accused the authorities in Kiev of "practising terror" and warned the deaths of the two Russian officers would have consequences. "We obviously will not let such things slide by," Putin said. "This is a very dangerous game." Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko hit back that Moscow's claims were "senseless and cynical". "These fantasies are only another pretext for the next military threats toward Ukraine," his office quoted him as saying.

Two residents living close to the Ukraine-Crimea frontier told AFP that there has been an unexplained build-up of Russian military hardware in the area over the past few weeks. —AFP

# GERMANY MULLS STRIPPING CITIZENSHIP FROM JIHADISTS

## ACCELERATED DEPORTATION

**BERLIN:** German citizens with dual nationality who fight for a terror group should be stripped of their German citizenship, the interior minister said yesterday, unveiling tough new measures after two attacks claimed by the Islamic State group. "Germans who participate in fighting abroad for a terror militia and who have another citizenship should lose their German nationality," Thomas de Maiziere said. Some 820 people have left Germany to fight alongside jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, according to estimates by Germany's secret services. With around one in three fighters having since returned to Germany, fears are running high of the threat they may pose on European soil. But the issue of stripping German citizenship is controversial, with Green lawmaker Volker Beck swiftly condemning it as "desperate activism".

De Maiziere himself also acknowledged that junior coalition partner, the Social Democrats are likely to raise objections. The measure, as well as other plans he unveiled for fighting terror threats, must still be approved by the right-left coalition as well as in the German parliament.

But making his case, he pointed to German legislation which already allows for citizens with dual nationalities and who fight for a foreign army to be stripped of their German citizenship. "So if someone fights for terror militia that is similar to an armed force, and which calls itself an

army, I don't see why this should not be considered," he argued.

In the wake of the November 13 Paris attacks, French President Francois Hollande had proposed stripping convicted terrorists of their French nationality. But the suggestion had to be dropped after a fierce debate, as critics warned it would create stateless persons.



**BERLIN:** Germany's Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere delivers a statement to announce new anti-terror measures yesterday.—AFP

'Accelerated deportation' Looking beyond the problem of home-

grown jihadists, de Maiziere also introduced plans to tackle threats posed by foreigners to Germany, including speeding up the deportation process for those convicted. Germany's toughened stance comes after two attacks in July by migrants in the southern state of Bavaria—an axe rampage on a train in Wuerzburg and a suicide bombing in Ansbach. In Wuerzburg, the 17-year-old attacker was shot dead by police after injuring five people. In Ansbach, 15 people were injured after a failed Syrian asylum seeker detonated an explosive device outside a music festival, killing himself. The link to migrants has put intense pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel over her liberal asylum policies that had brought 1.1 million refugees to Germany last year. With two state elections in September at Merkel's stronghold Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and in Berlin—concern is growing among the political mainstream that populist party, the AfD, could make record gains, ahead of general elections next year. De Maiziere said the latest anti-terror measures should be adopted before the autumn 2017 elections. On the policing front, staffing will be boosted with 4,600 new posts to be created over the next year. In addition, spending on security would be raised by 2.0 billion euros (\$2.2 billion) by 2020. A special division will be set up within federal police forces that would coordinate security efforts in terror situations, said de Maiziere.—AFP

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