

Kiev Says 'Illegal Seizure' of Crimea Cost Ukraine \$83Bln

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Russia's annexation of Crimea has cost Ukraine at least \$83 billion, according to Ukraine's acting Justice Minister.

"The losses from the [Russian] occupation of Crimea run to 950 billion hryvna (\$83 billion), and that does not include forfeited benefits," Pavel Petrenko announced Monday, RIA Novosti reported.

The assessment "does not include the value of [the region's] natural resources, in particular those buried in the offshore sea shelf," he said, but are costs stemming exclusively from the "illegal seizure of territory and the erection of artificial barriers to the use of Ukrainian property."

Russia annexed Crimea after 96 percent of the population voted to join Russia in a rushed referendum on March 16 that Western nations branded illegal. Two weeks before the vote, Russian military personnel took control of the peninsula, barricading Ukrainian forces inside their bases.

Petrenko also announced that Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council supported filing additional claims to the European Court of Human Rights over the violation of rights of Ukrainian citizens in Crimea.

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