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Crimea Seizes Power Plant From Ukrainian Oligarch

By The Moscow Times

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Rinat Akhmetov

The Crimean government on Wednesday expropriated the region's biggest power generation and grid company from its Ukrainian oligarch owner after spats with Kiev caused severe electricity outages last month.

Crimea's parliament unanimously voted to deprive Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man, of the 57.49 stake in Krymenergo, which belonged to his energy conglomerate DTEK, the Interfax news agency reported.

Crimean leader Sergei Aksyonov said that electricity generation "should be controlled by the government" and accused Krymenergo of extorting money from Crimean companies and citizens, according to the agency.

The company will remain government property, Aksyonov added.

This was far from the first impromptu expropriation to strike Crimean business. The new Crimean authorities have seized and nationalized assets worth some $1 billion since Russia annexed the peninsula from Ukraine in March last year, according to estimates by The New York Times.

Crimea's 2 million residents were hit with blackouts last month after Kiev, which supplies most of the region's electricity, temporarily cut supplies. Ukraine, which has been forced to ration electricity amid a shortfall of coal used for power generation, said Crimea had exceeded its consumption quota. Crimean officials criticized Krymenergo during the crisis.

The Crimean parliament also on Wednesday voted to nationalize the region's interbank currency exchange, Interfax reported.

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