

Ukrainian Telephone Company Pulls Plug on Crimea

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Ukrtelecom cut off more than 80 percent of Crimea's fixed telephone subscribers.

Ukrainian telephone company Ukrtelecom "completely disconnected" Crimea on Tuesday, regional authorities said, nearly a year after Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula.

The measure, which took effect at 1 a.m., cut off more than 80 percent of Crimea's fixed telephone subscribers, according to Russian state news agency RIA Novosti.

Regional landline communications have since been re-established, but Internet, mobile and long-distance services are still being worked on, the Crimean government's Ministry of Internal Policy, Information and Communications said in a statement.

Minister Dmitry Polonsky later dispelled rumors that armed men had taken over the company's regional office. "There was no takeover. No one has intended to or is intending to take over anyone," he told RIA Novosti.

The ministry said in its statement that it had not received any information about the cutoff.

A ministry official was able to get in touch with a company representative who confirmed the measure but would not provide a reason for it, the statement said.

The company had already disconnected the major Crimean city of Sevastopol in September, RIA Novosti reported.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014, inciting international outrage and prompting the United States and European Union to impose sanctions against Russian officials and businesspeople.

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