

Crimea Blackout Sees Minister Sacked, Russia Threatens Payback

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An employee (L) speaks with people at an electronics store, with the power turned off inside, in Simferopol, Crimea, Nov. 22, 2015.

Crimean Prime Minister Sergei Aksyonov has dismissed the peninsula's Energy Minister Sergei Yegorov, citing his “unsatisfactory” handling of the power outage this weekend when all four power lines supplying electricity from Ukraine were disabled, the Krym Inform news agency reported Tuesday.

Aksyonov quoted the ministry's “inability to draw up and fulfill plans for power shutdowns” and “unfair distribution of power generated locally” as reasons for Yegorov’s discharge, the RBC news agency reported Tuesday.

He has appointed his former adviser Svetlana Borodulina as a replacement.

“She will be able to deal with the situation. As my adviser, she has taken part in all [governance] processes without exception, and will be able to take over,” he was quoted as saying by RBC.

He added that the energy minister's handling of the blackout will be investigated by the prosecutor's office.

Aksyonov met with Crimean municipal and regional authorities on Monday, promising that they would be supplied with energy in accordance with the government's earlier commitments, RBC reported.

Meanwhile, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak told reporters that Moscow may take retaliatory measures against Kiev following the power outage, the news site said Monday in a separate report.

"I cannot give an answer now, but I think this matter will be considered shortly," he was quoted as saying when asked about the possibility of halting coal supplies to Ukraine.

He also referred to the destruction of the power lines in Ukraine's southern Kherson region as "a criminal act," and criticized Kiev's delay in carrying out repair work.

"[The delays] mean that the Ukrainian authorities approve of the activities of extremist groups, as they are not taking any action," he said.

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