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Russian Officials Condemn Google's New Crimean Street Names

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Russian officials have condemned tech-giant Google for updating its online map of the Crimea with new names decided by the Ukrainian government.

The company has updated its maps in of the peninsula in accordance with a new Ukrainian de-communization law designed to modernize the country's Communist-era place names, the RBC news website reported Thursday.

Ukraine's parliament passed the law in April 2015, beginning a program of removing symbols of Soviet power such as the hammer and sickle and red star.

“These people suffer from topographical cretinism," said Dmitry Polonsky, deputy chairman of the Council of Crimean Ministers. "That will get worse after they rename everything, but that's their problem. Russia has its own map services; we do not have to use Google,” he said, RBC reported.

Polonsky claimed that the U.S. company's decision to change the place names would reduce Russian interest in Google services. “We call our towns and villages the names they actually have, not by the names someone forces on us,” he said.

Crimea's Prime Minister Sergei Askenov says Google's changes pander to feelings of Russophobia in Ukraine.

"Kiev calls it decommunization, but actually under that title lies a cave of Russophobic feelings and the desire to destroy the common history between Russia and Ukraine. It's hard to say why [Google] feels the need to indulge Kiev," he said, the Interfax news agency reported.

Ukraine's de-communization program will see the demolition of monuments to Soviet leaders and the renaming of the streets and squares named after them.

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