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Turkey Refuses to Recognize Crimean State Duma Elections

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Turkey will not recognize Sunday's State Duma elections in Crimea as legitimate, the RIA Novosti news outlet reported Friday.

"Turkey continues to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea," said Tanju Bilgich, a spokesperson for the Turkish Foreign Ministry. "In this regard, we believe that the results of the elections in Crimea have no legal force," he said, RIA Novosti reported.

The decision comes as a blow to ties between Ankara and Moscow, which had been improving after months of strained relations.

A stand-off between the two nations began in November 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russian fight jet on the Syrian border. Moscow responded by banning package tours to the country, as well as imports of Turkish fruits and vegetables. The sanctions remained in place until Turkish President Recep Erdogan apologized earlier this year.

A number of other countries have refused to recognize the elections in the Crimean

Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014.

The State Duma elections on Sunday, Sept. 18, saw a landslide victory for the ruling United Russia party. Four deputies were elected from the Crimean Peninsula, including the Crimean Prosecutor General, United Russia's Natalya Poklonskaya. United Russia secured 53.78 percent of the vote in the Crimean city of Sevastopol and 68.58 percent in the region's capital of Simferopol.

Poland, Lithuania and the United States are among those who have already announced their refusal to recognize the Crimean elections, while Ukraine has declared the entire Russian State Duma "illegitimate."

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