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Belarus' Top Experts Ordered to Withdraw from Russian-Led Customs Union

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko **Sergei Grits / AP**

President Alexander Lukashenko has ordered the country's top customs experts to withdraw from their posts at the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The move follows Lukashenko's refusal to sign the EAEU Customs Code in December 2016 in St. Petersburg. The Belarusian president refused to attend the meeting alongside the EAEU's other members: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia

“I did not sign the Customs Code because many things that should be there do not work. I also asked to recall our main specialists from its authorities,” Lukashenko announced on Wednesday. He also said that some elements of the new code "did not work."

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An ongoing dispute focused on the Russian-Belarusian border has placed increasing strain on Moscow-Minsk ties in recent months.

Russian security services reintroduced customs and migrations checks along the border in the Bryansk, Smolensk and Pskov regions on Feb. 7, while Belarusian food exports have also come under scrutiny.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has criticized the decisions as damaging to bilateral ties. The Kremlin has dismissed concerns, arguing that increased security checks are only intended for non-Belarusian nationals.

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