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Putin Reserves Key 5G Frequency for Military Use, Media Reports

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Anton Kardashov / Moskva News Agency

Russia risks falling behind the rest of the world in next-generation 5G technology after President Vladimir Putin has reserved its most popular frequency range for the military and intelligence services, Russia's Vedomosti business daily reported Thursday.

With speeds at least 10 times faster than 4G technology, 5G is expected to power internet-connected products ranging from self-driving cars and smart cities to augmented reality and artificial intelligence. The 3.4-3.8GHz range is widely popular for 5G technology, with only China and Japan using 4.4-4.99GHz, a frequency with limited equipment availability.

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Putin has sided with the Security Council in its position against allocating the 3.4GHz-3.8GHZ frequency range to mobile operators for the development of 5G, Vedomosti reported, citing sources including a government official, a telecom employee and a source familiar with

Russia's 5G deliberations.

The 3.4GHz-3.8GHz frequencies are reportedly reserved for military, intelligence and security use. Russia's Communications Ministry has proposed allocating the 4.4GHz-4.99GHz frequency range for 5G, the Kommersant business daily reported this week.

The Kremlin later on Thursday declined to comment on what it said was "official correspondence."

"This is fake news," an unnamed source from one of Russia's top four telecom providers told the state-run TASS news agency after the Vedomosti report was published.

"This is Putin's reaction in spring to the Security Council's April letter. Things have changed dramatically in favor of 3.4GHz-3.8GHz since then. Operators and the Communications Ministry are currently rewriting the 5G development concept with a view toward 3.4-3.8GHz," the source said.

The Swedish telecom equipment supplier Ericsson announced last week that it launched Russia's first 5G zone in central Moscow with the country's fourth-largest operator Tele2. Putin's digital economy project aims to deploy 5G across major Russian cities by 2022.

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