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Russia Is ‘Ready’ to Disconnect from Global Internet, Medvedev Says

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Dmitry Medvedev said Russia is capable of isolating its internet from the global web, he stressed that he didn’t see any reason to do so, calling it a “double-edged weapon." **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia is “legally and technologically” ready to disconnect from the global internet if needed, former President Dmitry Medvedev told Interfax Monday.

Russian authorities have long flirted with the notion of tougher restrictions and control over the internet on Russian territory. While the country’s "sovereign internet" law passed in 2019 gives Russia the ability to cut itself off from the rest of the World Wide Web, experts have expressed doubts that Russia was capable of implementing such technology.

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While Medvedev said Russia is capable of isolating its internet from the global web, he stressed that he didn’t see any reason to do so, calling it a “double-edged weapon."

Medvedev, who is currently deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, said that the U.S. retains "key rights of control" to the internet which could result in Russia being disconnected from the global internet "if something extraordinary happens." Pointing to another example, he also said Russia could also be disconnected from the SWIFT international payment system.

"We even had to create our own system for transmitting information so that we can exchange electronic messages if this suddenly happens," he said.

Medvedev's statement comes on the heels of mass protests that swept more than 100 Russian cities over the past two weekends. The rallies were sparked by the detention of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and the release of his "Putin's Palace" investigation which drew over 100 million views on YouTube. Last week, Russia's communications regulator said it would fine seven social media companies for not taking down videos promoting the protests.

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