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Russia Vows to 'Relaunch' Economy of Ukraine's Occupied Kherson

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Russian military servicemen distributing humanitarian aid to local civilians in the city of Kherson.
Russian Defence Ministry / TASS

This article was corrected with the date of Russia's occupation of Kherson and updated with details about Russian confiscations of agricultural goods and equipment in the surrounding region.

A top Russian official has promised to revive the occupied southern Ukrainian region of Kherson by rebuilding roads, bridges and buildings destroyed as a result of the Kremlin-ordered invasion of Ukraine.

Visiting the Russian-occupied region Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin told pro-Kremlin TV channel Crimea 24 that money had already been allocated to the project.

Russian troops gained control over Kherson in early March, shortly after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the attack on Ukraine, and have been accused of widespread looting, theft and damage to local infrastructure.

Several pro-Ukraine rallies in Kherson were violently dispersed by Russian security forces, and there have been reports of kidnappings, abductions and murders of locals opposed to the occupation.

Khusnullin said that rebuilding destroyed parts of the city would be Russia's first priority, but that Moscow was also interested in supporting the region's agriculture sector.

"We do believe that Kherson has bright prospects and a decent place in our Russian family," Khusnullin told Crimea 24. "There is no need to be afraid of anything. We will continue to live and work together."

Like other occupied areas of Ukraine, Russia has been introducing its own currency, media outlets and internet services in Kherson and Russian forces have installed a pro-Moscow "military-civilian administration."

Evidence has also emerged that Russian officials are organizing confiscations in the Kherson region of agricultrual machinery and grain stocks, which have been shipped to Russia and Russian-controlled Crimea.

Ukrainian officials have said that the industrial-scale of these confiscations suggests there is a high risk of hunger and shortages in occupied areas like Kherson.

Earlier in May, Kherson was visited by Andrei Turchak, the head of ruling United Russia party, who said that Russians would remain in Kherson "forever."

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