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FSB Official Takes Over Moscow-Occupied Kherson Region

By AFP

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Sergei Yeliseyev. **Vitaly Nevar / TASS**

An official from Russia's powerful FSB security services took over the government of the Moscow-occupied Kherson region in southern Ukraine, Kremlin-installed authorities said Tuesday.

Sergei Yeliseyev, until now the deputy head of government in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, "became head of the government in the Kherson region," said Vladimir Saldo, who heads the Russian occupational administration.

His government takes office on Tuesday, he added.

A graduate of the FSB Academy, 51-year-old Yeliseyev served in the security services in unspecified functions, according to the Kaliningrad region website.

Alexei Kovalev, a former Ukrainian lawmaker who has switched to Russia's side in the conflict

and survived an assassination attempt in June, was appointed as Yeliseyev's deputy.

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"Ukraine is forever in the past for the Kherson region. Russia is here forever," the Moscow-installed authorities said on Telegram.

Kherson city, which lies close to Moscow-annexed Crimea, was the first major city to fall to Russian forces since the Kremlin sent troops to Ukraine in February.

Moscow has since launched a campaign of so-called Russification, trying to introduce the ruble, giving out Russian passports and opening a first Russian bank at the end of June.

Critical voices have been largely suppressed.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his Ukraine campaign in late February, he said Moscow did not intend to occupy Ukraine.

But since then, the Kremlin has said that people in those areas should choose their own future, implying that it may organize an annexation, as was the case with the Crimea peninsula in 2014.

There have been several attacks on representatives of Moscow's occupational forces in Kherson in recent weeks.

Bolstered with new weapons from the West, Kyiv's army has regained some settlements in southern Ukraine from Russian forces.

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