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Kremlin Declines to Comment on Naval Chief Sacking Reports

By AFP

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Russian Navy Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov. **Russian Defense Ministry**

The Kremlin said Monday that it would not comment on reports that it had sacked the commander-in-chief of the Russian navy after having lost several warships to Ukrainian attacks in the Black Sea.

Russian media, including the pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper, reported over the weekend that Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov had been replaced by Northern Fleet commander Alexander Moiseyev.

The Kremlin refused to comment on the reported reshuffle, which would typically be announced by presidential decree.

"There are decrees labeled secret, I cannot comment on them. There were no public decrees on this matter," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

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Yevmenov, 61, was appointed head of the navy in May 2019.

If confirmed, his removal would be the biggest shakeup in Russia's military top brass since the sacking of aerospace force chief Sergei Surovikin last year.

Ukrainian forces claim to have destroyed more than two dozen Russian ships, including a military patrol boat last week, since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

The sinkings are an embarrassment for Russia, which has been forced to move boats from the Sevastopol naval base in annexed Crimea to the port of Novorossiysk, further to the east.

Russia's Black Sea setbacks come in stark contrast to its land offensive in eastern Ukraine, where its forces have advanced in recent months after over a year of deadlocked fighting.

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