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Kyrgyzstan Dismantles Central Asia's Tallest Lenin Statue

By AFP

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The Lenin statue in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. **Adam Harangozó / Wikimedia Commons**

Russian ally Kyrgyzstan on Saturday quietly dismantled Central Asia's tallest monument to Vladimir Lenin, the revolutionary founder of the Soviet Union.

Ex-Soviet states across the region are seeking to strengthen their national identities, renaming cities that have Russian-sounding names and replacing statues of Soviet figures with local and national heroes.

Russia, which has military bases in Kyrgyzstan, is striving to maintain its influence there in the face of competition from China and the West and amid its invasion of Ukraine.

Officials in the city of Osh — where the 23-meter (75-foot) high monument stood on the central square — warned against "politicizing" the decision to "relocate" it.

Osh is the second-largest city in the landlocked, mountainous country.

The figure was quietly taken down overnight and is set to be "relocated," Osh officials said.

The decision "should not be politicized," city hall said, pointing to several other instances in Russia "where Lenin monuments have also been dismantled or relocated."

"This is a common practice aimed at improving the architectural and aesthetic appearance of cities," it said in a statement.

Despite some attempts to de-Sovietize the region, memorials and statues to Soviet figures are common across the region, with monuments to Lenin prevalent in the vast majority of cities in Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan was annexed and incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 19th century and then became part of the Soviet Union following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

It gained independence with the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991.

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