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Putin Defends Mobile Internet Outages as Necessary Measure in Fight Against Terrorism

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Vladimir Putin. **kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday addressed the escalating wave of mobile internet blackouts sweeping Russia, defending the disruptions as a vital defense against "terrorist attacks" and dismissing calls for advance public notice as a threat to national security.

"Criminals, after all, hear everything and see everything. If some information reaches them, they will undoubtedly adjust their criminal behavior and their criminal plans," Putin told a meeting of cabinet members.

The comments mark the first time Putin has personally waded into the confusion caused by the internet disruptions, which some have criticized as a kind of "digital iron curtain." While online restrictions have become common since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, outages have intensified in recent months, with monitoring groups saying most regions throughout the country now face daily internet disruptions.

The Kremlin previously defended the restrictions, including those targeting specific platforms like Telegram and WhatsApp, as legal and necessary for ensuring security.

On Thursday, Putin urged law enforcement agencies to "demonstrate the necessary ingenuity in their work, high professionalism and to take into account the citizens' vital interests," but he stressed that safety and security, in his view, remains the top priority.

He ordered Russia's Digital Development Minister Maksut Shadayev to work more closely with the security services in order to ensure the uninterrupted operation of a so-called "white list" of online services. The registry, which includes the government-backed messenger Max, state news agencies and major banks, is designed to remain functional while the rest of the web goes dark.

Putin did not comment at all about the recent push to curb the use of virtual private networks (VPNs), which have become a key tool for bypassing the internet restrictions. Shadayev said in late March that reducing VPN usage had been set as a priority for his ministry.

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