

Ukraine Appoints New Acting Defense Minister

By [Christopher Brennan](#)

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Ukraine's parliament on Tuesday installed Colonel General Myhaylo Koval as the country's new acting defense minister after approving the resignation of his predecessor, Ihor Tenyukh.

Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov had nominated Koval, a 58-year-old military man who has commanded a parachute battalion and served as the deputy head of the State Border Service, after the Ukrainian Rada accepted the resignation of Tenyukh in a second vote on the matter, Interfax reported.

In the first round of voting, the parliament failed to clear the 226 votes needed, with only 197 of 310 deputies supporting the departure, but the measure got 228 votes in the second round.

Offering his resignation because of criticism against him, Tenyukh rejected the idea that he had not given prompt orders concerning Crimea, which is being vacated by Ukrainian troops following Russia's annexation of the peninsula last week. Tenyukh said that on March 3 he

gave orders authorizing soldiers to use their weapons according to regulations.

Tenyukh was also criticized for not ordering troops to leave Crimea earlier.

Tenyukh said Tuesday that only 4,300 of the 18,800 servicemen based in Crimea planned to stay in the Ukrainian armed forces, Reuters reported.

Many Ukrainian forces in Crimea have either joined the Russian army or left their bases after they were taken over by Russian forces, who have been in the region since early March. The run up to a referendum on Crimea's secession from Ukraine was pervaded by standoffs between Russian and Ukrainian forces, though no blood was spilled by either side.

Last week, after the referendum, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry and Crimean police reported that a Ukrainian soldier and Crimean "self-defense fighter" had been killed at a skirmish in Simferopol.

Tenyukh, a member of the nationalist Svoboda party and one-time commander of the Ukrainian Navy, took the post of defense minister shortly after Kremlin-ally and former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled Kiev amid violent anti-government protests.

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