

Russia to Abolish Black Sea Fleet Deals With Ukraine

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Russia has begun preparations for terminating bilateral agreements with Ukraine related to the status and operation of the Black Sea Fleet, a Kremlin spokesman said Friday.

The decision was made at a Security Council meeting chaired by President Vladimir Putin.

Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the measures to be scrapped include a 1997 agreement on the conditions of the fleet's stay in Crimea, which was extended by 25 years in a 2010 deal by former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

In exchange, Ukraine received a discount of \$100 on each 1,000 cubic meters of natural gas imported from Russia, which was provided for by cutting export duties on the gas, money that would have gone into Russia's state budget.

A bill to void the agreements was submitted to the State Duma on Friday afternoon.

The Russian Black Sea fleet is headquartered in Sevastopol, a city with special status within

Crimea, which became Russian territory last week after 60 years as part of Ukraine.

The Kremlin said earlier this month that as the base is no longer located in Ukraine, there were no legal grounds for the discount to be continued.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said last Friday that Moscow would seek a reimbursement of the \$11 billion Russia lost while the discount was in place.

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