

# *Kiev Orders Troops to Withdraw from Crimea*

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Kiev, March 24 (RHC) – Ukraine's interim president has ordered the full withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the strategic Black Sea Crimean Peninsula.

Oleksandr Turchynov issued the order on Monday, shortly after Russian forces took over another naval base in Crimea. The base in the Crimean port city of Feodosia was one of the few military facilities still flying the Ukrainian flag after the territory joined the Russian Federation last week.

Tensions have remained high in Crimea since the peninsula separated from the former Soviet state and rejoined Russia a week ago.

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Sunday that the Russian flag is now flying over 189 military facilities across the Crimean territory.

Crimea declared independence from Ukraine and formally applied to become part of the Russian Federation following a referendum on March 16, in which 96.8% of Crimeans voted for union with Russia, with a turnout of 83.1%.

On March 21st, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law documents that officially made the Black Sea peninsula part of Russian territory despite condemnation and threats by the United States, the

European Union and the new Ukrainian government.

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