

# Ukraine's Foreign Ministry demands Russia hand over control of lighthouses

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**KIEV, Ukraine** Ukraine's Foreign Ministry demanded Monday that Russia to hand over control of lighthouses used by the Russian fleet along the Crimean coast to fulfill a court decision.

The 22 lighthouses "cannot be controlled and used in practice" by the Russian fleet under the court decision, the ministry said in a statement.

Last week, a court in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol ruled that the lighthouses held by the Russian Black Sea fleet must be returned to the control of Ukraine's Transport Ministry. The ruling cannot be appealed.

"Ukraine does not accept and is surprised by the Russian position. ... It violates international and Ukrainian law," the statement said.

Ukrainian presidential legal adviser Mykola Poludennyi said that Russia held the lighthouses illegally, and called on Moscow to fulfill the court's ruling.

Russia said the court's decision violated a 1997 agreement that divided the fleet between Russia and Ukraine. According to that agreement, the Russian navy was allowed to remain in the port of Sevastopol until 2017 and be charged an annual rent of US\$93 million (€77 million).

Ukraine and Russia traded accusations earlier this year over the ownership of lighthouses on the coast, with Russia accusing Ukraine of attempting to seize them.

Also Monday, Ukrainian youth activists set up three tents and a Ukrainian flag in front of the Yevpatoriya lighthouse to dramatize their call for Russia's Black Sea fleet to hand over control of the building.