

Moscow backs Serbia's objections over OSCE Kosovo mission chief

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Disregarding Serbian objections to the new head of the OSCE mission in Kosovo erodes the legitimacy of the mission, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Monday.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe announced Thursday the appointment of Austrian diplomat Werner Almhofer, 48, as the new chief of its mission in Kosovo.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, appointed Almhofer, who replaces Tim Guldemann of Switzerland, without consulting OSCE member states, the ministry said on its website.

The Russian statement added that the decision was made "behind the scenes," despite Serbia's objections.

It said Almhofer was unacceptable to the host country, while disregard for Serbia's position was "fraught with serious complications for the activities of this field mission."

Belgrade said previously it would "take adequate measures against the decision and would continue to lobby against it."

Almhofer had been Austria's ambassador in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2005.

The OSCE mission is involved in institution-building and promotion of human rights in Kosovo.

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