TURKMENISTAN PRESIDENT FIRES COUNTRY'S TOP SECURITY OFFICIAL

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Turkmenistan's president has fired his longtime security chief, a man widely seen as one of the most influential officials in the Central Asian nation.

President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov's decree published Thursday in the government's newspaper Neutral Turkmenistan orders the dismissal of National Security Minister Yaylym Berdiyev.

The document said the minister was relieved of his duties due to his transfer to another position, but it didn't say what job he will take. Last month, the president reprimanded Berdiyev for unspecified flaws and stripped him of another title he had that of the secretary of the State Security Council.

The Turkmen leader named Berdiyev's deputy, Gurbanmyrat Annayev, to succeed him as the security minister. Deputy Prime Minister Charymurat Amanov was named to fill the position of the secretary of the State Security Council.

Berdymukhamedov has ruled the gas-rich ex-Soviet Central Asian nation since 2006 through an all-encompassing personality cult that styles him as Turkmenistans arkadaq, or protector. He has been frequently shown on state TV dressing down government officials.

In December, two other former top government officials were shown confessing on state television for their reported involvement in corruption, dressed in prison robes, their hands hand-cuffed and heads shaven clean.

Turkmenistan, a nation of 5.9 million people on the Caspian Sea, lies on the ancient Silk Road trading route to China.

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