Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: TA | AP Insight

Can Macron continue to resist the legislature dissolution after the fall of Lecornu's government?

France's new Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu resigned less than a month in office and less than 24 hours after naming a new government that prompted a key coalition ally to withdraw support.

The move plunged the country into a deep political crisis and left French President Emmanuel Macron with few options.

The French presidency said in a statement Monday that Macron, who has been hitting record lows in opinion polls, has accepted his resignation.

Lecornu had replaced his predecessor, François Bayrou, on Sept. 9 to become France's fourth prime minister in barely a year during a prolonged period of political instability. Lecornu is now the shortest-serving prime minister in the history of the Fifth Republic, which started in 1958.

French politics have been in disarray since Macron called snap elections last year that produced a deeply fragmented legislature and a political impasse.

Far-right and left-wing lawmakers hold over 320 seats at the National Assembly, while the centrists and allied conservatives hold 210, with no party having an overall majority.

Despite more than three weeks of efforts to secure enough support to avoid a no-confidence vote, Lecornu was forced out just hours after forming his Cabinet on Sunday, having lost the support of conservatives who hold 50 seats and who objected to his choice for defense minister.

Lecornu's government will manage day-to-day affairs until a new prime minister and Cabinet are appointed.

It is now up to Macron either to name a new head of government or to dissolve the National Assembly, and call early legislative elections.

A faithful ally of Macron, Lecornu said conditions were no longer met to remain in office after failing to build a consensus.

Lecornu said he believed the new government could have succeeded with just a little more work and if the coalition partners had only been a bit more "selfless," in an apparent jab at Bruno Retailleau, the head of the conservatives.

"One must always put one's country before one's party," Lecornu said.

Macron the main target

With less than two years before the next presidential election, Macron's opponents immediately tried to capitalize on the shocking resignation, with the far-right National Rally calling on him to either call for new snap parliamentary elections or resign.

"This raises a question for the President of the Republic: can he continue to resist the legislature dissolution? We have reached the end of the road," far-right leader Marine Le Pen said. "There is no other solution. The only wise course of action in these circumstances is to return to the polls."

On the far left, France Unbowed also asked for Macron's departure, while voices on the left called for the revival of a coalition made up of leftists, socialists, greens and communists.

The resignation rattled investors, sending the CAC-40 index of leading French companies plunging. The index was down by nearly 2% on its Friday close in the wake of the resignation before later making up some of the losses.

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return to the polls - Marine Le Pen

Ministers appointed just the previous night found themselves in the bizarre situation of becoming caretaker ministers — kept in place only to manage day-to-day affairs until a new government is formed — before some of them had even been formally installed in office.

Agnès Pannier-Runacher, the newly reappointed minister for ecology, posted on X: "I despair of this circus."

Lecornu's method did not work

Lecornu's choice of ministers has been criticized across the political spectrum, particularly his decision to bring back former Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire to serve at the defense ministry, with critics saying that under his watch France's public deficit soared.

Lecornu's main task would have been to pass a budget as France is faced with a massive debt crisis.

At the end of the first quarter of 2025, France's public debt stood at 3.346 trillion euros ($3.9 trillion), or 114% of GDP.

Debt servicing remains a major budget item, accounting for around 7% of state spending.

> This government embodied all the conditions to be censured - Bruno Retailleau

Other key positions remained largely unchanged from the previous Cabinet, with Retailleau staying on as interior minister in charge of policing and internal security, Jean-Noël Barrot remaining as foreign minister and Gérald Darmanin keeping the justice ministry.

Retailleau, the head of the conservative Republicans party, said he did not feel responsible for Lecornu's fall despite lashing out at the composition of the new government.

Retailleau blamed Lecornu for not letting him know Le Maire would be part of the government. "It's a matter of trust," he told TF1 broadcaster. "You promise a break and end up with returning horses. This government embodied all the conditions to be censured."

Seeking consensus at the National Assembly, Lecornu consulted with all political forces and trade unions before forming his Cabinet.

He also vowed that he would not employ a special constitutional power his predecessors had used to force budgets through Parliament without a vote and would instead seek compromise with lawmakers from the left and the right.