

Luzhkov Says He Won't Resign

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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Mayor Yuri Luzhkov gesturing during a UNESCO conference in Moscow dedicated to the education of small children. Luzhkov, who has been Moscow's mayor since 1992, said he would not resign, despite repor **Ivan Sekretarev**

Mayor Yuri Luzhkov returned from a weeklong vacation in Austria on Monday to announce that he would not resign, despite reports that the Kremlin had given him an ultimatum.

Analysts interpreted Luzhkov's statement as a sign that he had not managed to bargain for a senior post outside the government for himself and guarantees of safety for his business interests.

Federal authorities will be forced to continue talks with the mayor until he agrees to resign because a conflict with Luzhkov could undermine the results of the 2011 State Duma elections and 2012 presidential vote, analysts said.

"I am not going to resign of my own accord," Luzhkov, who celebrated his 74th birthday last week, said at a news conference.

A senior Kremlin official received the mayor on Sept. 17 and told him that he had one week to resign voluntarily, Vedomosti [reported](#) Sept. 21, citing an unidentified official in the presidential administration.

But Luzhkov's spokesman Sergei Tsoi told Interfax late Sunday that the mayor planned to work as usual Monday, from 8 a.m. until late afternoon.

Meanwhile, prominent cultural figures have sent a letter to Medvedev in support of Luzhkov, RIA-Novosti [reported](#) Monday.

The mayor might make a statement Tuesday about when and how he will leave his post — either at a regular City Hall meeting or on the program "Litsom k Gorodu" (Facing the City), which starts at 7:55 p.m. on TV Center, the television channel controlled by City Hall, Vedomosti [reported](#) Monday, citing two City Hall sources.

The date for Luzhkov's replacement will probably be decided Oct. 6 or 7, but not before President Dmitry Medvedev returns from China on Wednesday, the report said.

However, a City Hall source told RIA-Novosti on Monday that Luzhkov would go on three pre-planned business [trips abroad](#) as mayor in October. Luzhkov's trips will include one to Munich, Germany, for a real estate exhibit Oct. 4 to 6; one to Hanoi, Vietnam, for a "Days of Moscow" cultural program Oct. 7 to 10; and one to Astana, Kazakhstan, for an international religious forum Oct. 17 to 18.

Vedomosti reported last week that the government would propose a new job for Luzhkov within two or three weeks if he resigned. As a compromise, the Kremlin could split the mayor's responsibilities into leadership and functional roles and offer one of the positions to a Luzhkov loyalist, Vedomosti said Monday, citing a City Hall source.

Luzhkov looked calm Monday as he took part in the opening session of a three-day UNESCO conference dedicated to the education of small children. He also was to hold a number of other meetings, Tsoi said.

Asked by reporters what he thought of his first working day after his Austrian vacation, Luzhkov said, "It has started," Interfax reported.

Alexei Titkov, an analyst with the Institute of Regional Politics, said Luzhkov was hoping that Medvedev would not have enough resolve to remove him, in which case Luzhkov would benefit by "exercising his powers and signing orders."

Medvedev also needs to figure out how to handle the fallout of Luzhkov's possible departure on United Russia, the ruling party that Luzhkov co-founded and has used Medvedev's image in election campaigns with the president's permission.

"Medvedev will be trying to come to terms with Luzhkov because a blow to Luzhkov is a blow to United Russia," said Yevgeny Minchenko, director of the International Institute of Political Expertise, a think tank.

Luzhkov's departure depends on the position that he is offered afterward, Minchenko said.

"Luzhkov needs security guarantees for himself and the businesses that were formed under him," said Rostislav Turovsky, an independent regional analyst.

Turovsky predicted that the mayor and federal authorities could "get stuck in protracted talks that could last until the end of his term" in July 2011.

"Federal authorities had hoped that he would break down under the pressure of black PR, but Luzhkov turned out to be a tough nut to crack," Turovsky said.

Earlier this month, Luzhkov became the target of an unprecedented smear campaign on state-controlled television that accused him and his billionaire wife, Yelena Baturina, of corruption and negligence.

Last Monday, a program produced in Luzhkov's defense was unexpectedly axed at TV Center.

Meanwhile, Peterburgskaya Politika Foundation and Minchenko Consulting released a research [report](#) Monday that predicted four other regional leaders might be dismissed: Boris Gromov of the Moscow region, Dmitry Zelenin of the Tver region, Leonid Polezhayev of the Omsk region and Viktor Kress of the Tomsk region.

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