

Kozhin Tipped as Moscow's Mayor

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Former Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, seen in this file photograph, said he would not leave politics but has no plans to run for president in 2012, The New Times magazine reported, citing an interview that will **D. Grishkin**

A senior Kremlin bureaucrat was tipped as the latest front-runner in a race to become Moscow's new mayor on Thursday, even as newly ousted Yuri Luzhkov pledged not to quit politics.

While analysts expressed doubt that Luzhkov would be able to make much headway as an independent politician, several Ukrainian public groups called for him to become the mayor of Sevastopol.

Vladimir Kozhin, who heads the Office of Presidential Affairs, is the Kremlin favorite to become the next Moscow mayor, a Kremlin source said in an [interview](#) published Thursday in the Sobesednik newspaper.

Kozhin was named as the leading contender among seven being considered by the Kremlin,

the source said. His rivals include Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov; Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov; Alexander Khloponin, presidential envoy to the North Caucasus Federal District; Konstantin Chuichenko, chief of the Kremlin's control department; and Alexander Beglov, deputy head of the presidential administration.

The source also named government chief of staff Sergei Sobyanin, but Sobyanin said Thursday that he would not accept the post, Nezavisimaya Gazeta [reported](#).

United Russia's Moscow branch has compiled a list of "about seven" names to present to the party's central office, said senior official Yelena Panina, Vzglyad.ru [reported](#).

Panina named no names, but Prime-Tass [said](#) the list includes federal, regional and City Hall officials as well as Moscow prefects.

It remained unclear when a new mayor might be appointed. Panina said the Moscow branch would name its candidates by next week, and United Russia secretary Vyacheslav Volodin [said](#) the finalized list would be submitted to Medvedev by Oct. 11, United Russia's web site reported Thursday. Medvedev may then pick a name off the list or name someone else.

Vladimir Semago, a former State Duma deputy with United Russia who dropped a mayoral bid in favor of Luzhkov in 1999, demanded that his name be placed on the list, Lifenews.ru [reported](#).

Semago, who threatened to sue United Russia if he wasn't nominated, said he would make a good mayor because he was not rich and would not be accused of corruption.

Opposition politician Boris Nemtsov said the new mayor would be "dull, weak, dependent and loyal," Interfax reported.

Nemtsov also predicted that the functions of the next mayor would be split in two. Luzhkov served as both the mayor and the head of the body that represents the city of Moscow as a federal jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, Luzhkov's photo and biography, as well as transcripts of his official speeches, were all [removed](#) from City Hall's web site by Thursday.

At least a dozen senior members of Luzhkov's team may be fired soon, RIA-Novosti [said](#), citing Moscow government sources. The list includes Moscow's chief architect Alexander Kuzmin and Luzhkov's spokesman Sergei Tsoi, it said.

Former Deputy Mayor Alexander Ryabinin, who resigned this week, will be charged with bribe taking, Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said, Interfax reported. Ryabinin, who oversaw the city's lucrative construction sector, has been under a cloud for months after being accused of forcing a businessman to hand over a piece of retail property to his own daughter.

Luzhkov, meanwhile, said he would not leave politics but has no plans to run for president in 2012, The New Times magazine [reported](#), citing an interview that will be published Monday.

Luzhkov did not clarify what his political ambitions are, but a close friend, crooner and Duma

Deputy Iosif Kobzon, said the former mayor would not join the Kremlin's opponents, Interfax reported.

Analysts said Luzhkov had no chance of remaining a political heavyweight because he has alienated both Kremlin supporters and the opposition, and the authorities will not let him build his own political party.

"He can't be a pro-Kremlin politician, and opposition politicians have as many complaints about him as the authorities," said Alexei Makarkin, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies.

If Luzhkov created a party, he would either be "on the Kremlin leash" or "at the bottom of the ladder," said Rostislav Turovsky, an independent analyst.

Turovsky said Luzhkov would most likely end up like former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov, who was fired by then-President Vladimir Putin in 2004 and now heads a low-profile group, the Russian People's Democratic Union.

Luzhkov easily co-founded the Fatherland party in the late 1990s, but "now he can't," Makarkin said, in a nod to the authorities' tight grip over party registration.

"If Luzhkov had left of his own will, then surely a plum job would have been waiting for him," Makarkin added.

But an unexpected opportunity might come from Ukraine, where pro-Russian public groups have vowed to appeal to President Viktor Yanukovich to appoint Luzhkov as Sevastopol's mayor, said a local lawmaker, Vladimir Tyunin, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

Luzhkov is a vocal supporter of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population and was banned entry to the country in 2008 over a statement that Sevastopol should be returned to Russia. Yanukovich removed the ban in July.

Meanwhile, pins have gone on sale in the Urals depicting Luzhkov's head falling into a trash can accompanied with the slogan, "Don't wait until they kick you out like Luzhkov, work better!" Lifenews.ru [reported](#) Thursday. Luzhkov's name was turned into a verbal neologism, reading, literally, "to luzhkovize."

Local businessmen are snapping up the badges like hot cakes, apparently to present to their employees, the report said.

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