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Luzhkov Denied Residency in Austria

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Austria will not grant former Mayor Yury Luzhkov a residency permit because the country's government does not want to jeopardize relations with the Kremlin by favoring a fallen official, a news report said Thursday.

Intermediaries for Luzhkov were rebuffed when they checked whether the former mayor had a chance of getting a permit, Vienna's Die Presse newspaper reported, citing a source in the "Austrian network" of Luzhkov and his billionaire wife, Yelena Baturina.

The report also said Luzhkov has not filed a request with the Austrian consulate in Moscow. Austrian Embassy spokesman Robert Gerschner refused to comment on the report, citing embassy policy.

Luzhkov has made Austrian resort Kitzbühel his favorite destination in recent years, and Baturina, who owns a chalet and a luxury hotel there, has reportedly moved much of the foreign operations of her real estate company Inteko to Vienna.

Both are expected to attend the traditional Hahnenkamm world cup ski race this weekend, an annual magnet for the world's rich and famous.

Earlier this week, Latvia slapped an entry ban on Luzhkov after he applied for a residency permit in late December. The Interior Ministry in Riga linked the decision to Luzhkov's regular verbal attacks on Latvia while he governed Moscow.

Luzhkov has said he would try to get a residency permit in a European country in order to be able to move freely within the Schengen border-free zone of 25 states.

National media have named Bulgaria and Britain as likely targets of future attempts. While both countries offer favorable conditions to applicants, like a minimum investment in the local economy, they also share a common drawback for Luzhkov: They are not part of the Schengen zone.

Meanwhile, Luzhkov also has had to give up his official residence near Moscow State University, national media reported.

City Hall declined Luzhkov's request to retain the residency on Ulitsa Kosygina in exchange for giving up his right to a government dacha in Molodyonova, in the luxury district Rublyovka outside the city, the reports said. Instead Luzhkov will have to move into a relatively humble two-story building next to the home of his long-time deputy Vladimir Resin.

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