

Gaplikov Appointed As Olimpstroï Chief

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When Sergei Gaplikov was prime minister of the Chuvashia republic, he easily lost his cool when lawmakers grilled him over his policies during sessions of the local legislature.

“I remember him for his brusque behavior and arrogance toward the deputies,” Viktor Ilyin, leader of the Communist faction there, said Tuesday. “If someone spoke out with a different point of view, he could talk back rudely.”

He attributed some of Gaplikov's seamy manners to his one-time service as a conscript in the special forces of the General Staff's main intelligence department. The record of the service was on Gaplikov's resume, provided to the legislature when it voted him in as prime minister in 2004, Ilyin said.

Others describe Gaplikov, who was appointed to run the state corporation Olimpstroï late Monday, as having proved to be an apt public servant before he ended his tenure as Chuvashia prime minister in April.

“He's coped well,” recalled Vyacheslav Alexandrov, a United Russia lawmaker and chief of the local branch of Sberbank. “Chuvashia achieved good results in many industries.”

Before his most recent appointment, Gaplikov did a brief stint as Putin's Cabinet chief of staff for economy, but little is known about his work there.

Among Gaplikov's Chuvashia achievements, Alexandrov pointed out that an asphalt road now leads to every little town in the region, crowning efforts to develop the local infrastructure over the past few years.

Gaplikov also backed an idea in 2009 to allocate regional budget funds for building apartments that the government could rent out to financially insecure tenants at low rates, Alexandrov said. The plan helped support housing construction — and maintain jobs in the industry — as private demand plummeted in the thralls of the financial crisis, he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, who oversees construction for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, said Tuesday that he had recommended Gaplikov for the Olimpstroï job.

When he was Cabinet deputy chief of staff, Gaplikov was also in charge of the Olympic projects, Kozak said. Despite his brief tenure in the post — just 10 months — Gaplikov gained enough experience to work “successfully” at the new job, Kozak said.

Olimpstroï has the challenging task of ensuring timely completion of the construction of all Olympic facilities, which are being built from scratch in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, amid accusations of environmental damage. Perhaps indicating the pressure that befalls Olimpstroï chiefs, Gaplikov will be the fourth man to take helm since the corporation's inception in 2007.

“One has to have courage to accept this job,” Kozak said. “Sergei Anatolyevich [Gaplikov] did it.”

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin appointed Gaplikov, 40, to replace 58-year-old Taimuraz Bolloyev, who asked to resign because of health reasons.

Gaplikov demonstrated that his eloquence sometimes borders on the sultry. During a 2006 speech at the American Chamber of Commerce, he likened his affection for Chuvashia to the love for a “beautiful young woman” and added that the region looked best when it wasn't cold.

“It is, of course, more pleasant to be there during the time when ... the weather is warm, because the young woman sheds much and shows what is, in fact, hidden during winter and fall,” he said, according to a transcript of the speech.

Gaplikov does not plan any “revolutionary” staff changes at Olimpstroï, Kozak said.

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