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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kadyrov Gets a New Term

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GROZNY — Chechen lawmakers have handed strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov a new five-year term, unanimously approving the Kremlin nominee in a vote whose outcome was never in doubt.

President Dmitry Medvedev's nomination of Kadyrov for a new term last week underscored the Kremlin's reliance on the former rebel who rights activists say rules the volatile region by intimidation and abuse.

In power since 2007, Kadyrov will start a new term in April after the unanimous vote in Chechnya's 41-member parliament on Saturday.

"We have built roads, schools, hospitals and homes. ... We are transforming the republic into one of the best and most prosperous territories not only in the North Caucasus, but in all of Russia," Kadyrov, 34, told lawmakers after the vote.

The Kremlin credits Kadyrov with maintaining a shaky peace and rebuilding Chechnya. But his critics say Kadyrov rules the republic of 1.1 million as a personal fiefdom and directs a campaign of violence against his opponents, claims he has repeatedly dismissed as attempts

to blacken his name.

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