

Kudrin Will Lose All Official Posts

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MOSCOW – Ousted former Russian Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin will quit all other financial posts after being forced out for objecting to the job swap between President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, news agencies said Tuesday.

Kudrin will leave the posts of chairman of the Financial Markets Council and the National Banking Council, as well as international positions where he represented Russia's interests, Arkady Dvorkovich, Medvedev's top economic adviser, was quoted as saying.

"These posts should be held by a currently serving state official," Dvorkovich said, according to news agency Itar-Tass.

Kudrin was pressured into resigning last month after he said he would not work in a future government if Medvedev becomes prime minister in a planned job swap with Putin, who revealed plans to return to the presidency in a March 2012 vote he is all but certain to win.

Kudrin has stayed on in some posts as head of the relatively low-profile financial markets and banking councils. That soothed investors who saw the long-serving fiscal hawk as a linchpin of stability but represented an indirect challenge to Medvedev, who had stormily demanded

his resignation in a televised meeting.

The decision for Kudrin to leave those posts appeared aimed as a display of order and discipline -- a face-saver for Medvedev, who has been tasked with leading Putin's ruling United Russia party into a Dec. 4 parliamentary election.

Kudrin has remained on the public circuit in Moscow, holding a breakfast briefing with investors last Friday during a major financial conference, in what could have been seen as an attempt to undermine Medvedev.

The removal of Kudrin, who is unpopular with Russians who want more public spending, takes away a prominent target of criticism by United Russia's rivals ahead of the vote.

Both Putin and Medvedev, however, have suggested Kudrin may hold some high-level post in the future. Putin said last week that Kudrin "remains a part of my team", a hint he might hire him for an influential Kremlin job after his expected return to the presidency, and analysts have speculated he could become central bank chief.

The Kremlin administration and Russian central bank are both separate from the government led by the prime minister, so holding such posts would not contradict Kudrin's statement that he would not work in the government under Medvedev.

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