

Naryshkin, Zhukov Head to Duma

By [Alexandra Odyнова](#)

December 15, 2011



Sergei Naryshkin, left, speaking in 2009 with Vladislav Surkov, right, the new acting Kremlin chief of staff. **Igor Tabakov**

A government shuffle advanced Thursday with Kremlin chief of staff Sergei Naryshkin and Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov stepping down to take seats in the State Duma.

Kremlin first deputy chief of staff Vladislav Surkov, the powerful gray cardinal credited with creating Russia's "sovereign democracy," will take the reins from Naryshkin for now, but an analyst predicted that he might not stay long as acting chief of staff.

Naryshkin and Zhukov, government heavyweights who ran for the Duma on United Russia's ticket, automatically become frontrunners for the speaker's seat, vacated by Boris Gryzlov after eight years on Wednesday.

United Russia, which won a majority of 238 of the 450 seats in the Duma after the Dec. 4 elections, will announce its choice for speaker on Saturday, Izvestia [reported](#).

Naryshkin, a college friend of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, is exactly the type of trusted ally that the Kremlin needs in the new Duma, and his appointment to the speaker's post is all but certain, said Vladimir Pribylovsky, a political analyst with Panorama, a think tank.

"It would be a reasonable move considering his level [of seniority]," he said.

Zhukov, a Duma veteran, might become Naryshkin's deputy speaker, he said.

Naryshkin, 57, is a St. Petersburg native — like Putin — and a member of Putin's inner circle. An engineer by profession, he is believed to have worked in the KGB in the 1980s and studied at a KGB college along with Putin, who is two years his senior. He worked with Putin in St. Petersburg administration in the 1990s but did not follow him to the Kremlin until 2004. He became Kremlin chief of staff after Dmitry Medvedev ascended to the presidency in 2008.

Naryshkin has maintained a low public profile throughout his career, though he was tipped as a second-tier presidential candidate before the 2008 election. He recently attracted attention by clashing with ousted Mayor Yury Luzhkov, whom he accused in October of fostering corruption in the capital as mayor. The dispute prompted a lawsuit, which is under review in a Moscow court.

By contrast, Zhukov, 55, a Moscow-born and Harvard-educated economist, is an old Duma hand, having served in four parliaments between 1991 and 2004, when he traded his mandate for the job of deputy prime minister. A skilled chess player, he also heads the Russian Olympic Committee and oversees preparation for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

The Kremlin did not say Thursday who would replace Naryshkin. Medvedev's spokeswoman Natalya Timakova said only that the new Kremlin chief of staff "will be appointed in the nearest future," [Vedomosti reported](#).

Surkov, who has reportedly long coveted the post, is unlikely to get it even now after disputed Duma elections that he is believed to have overseen, said Pribylovsky, the analyst.

Surkov is "not trustworthy enough" for the job, Pribylovsky said.

Earlier media reports have spoken about tensions between Surkov and Medvedev, who Putin confirmed after his call-in show Thursday would become his prime minister if he is elected president as expected next March.

A Kremlin official told [Vedomosti](#) on condition of anonymity that the new Kremlin chief of staff might be Konstantin Chuichenko, a presidential aide who befriended Putin in college.

Surkov, a half-Chechen who grew up in the Ryazan region, did his conscription service in the GRU military intelligence agency in the 1980s. He worked for tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky from 1987 to 1996, and later did a stint as head of public relations at ORT television, now called Channel One.

Surkov joined the Kremlin in 1999 and earned a reputation as its political mastermind. He is credited with establishing several political parties, including United Russia, A Just Russia and Right Cause, as well as a number of pro-Kremlin youth groups, including Nashi.

Surkov is also known for dabbling in the arts. He is credited with writing the lyrics for two solo albums by Vadim Samoilo of goth rockers Agata Kristi, as well as the political novel "Okolonolya," published in 2009 under the pen name Natan Dubovitsky.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/12/15/naryshkin-zhukov-head-to-duma-a11468>