

Ivanov Replaces Naryshkin In Kremlin

By [Alexey Eremenko](#)

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Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov became the Kremlin chief of staff on Thursday in what analysts called a reward for one of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's closest allies and part of preparations for Putin's expected return to the Kremlin next year.

Ivanov, who lost out to Dmitry Medvedev as Putin's choice as successor four years ago, has a poor track record in the government, where he has failed to implement army reforms, crack down on rampant corruption in defense spending, and revitalize the aviation and space industries.

But that hardly matters because of Ivanov's closeness to Putin and Putin's confidence in him, analysts said.

"Ivanov was seriously humiliated by Putin in 2007 ... and this appointment is compensation for that snub," said Stanislav Belkovsky, an independent political analyst and one-time Kremlin insider. "This is in line with Putin's philosophy: A man who tolerated humiliation must be rewarded."

President Medvedev signed a decree on Ivanov's appointment after wrapping up his state-of-the-nation address, presidential spokeswoman Natalya Timakova said, Interfax reported.

Former Kremlin chief of staff Sergei Naryshkin traded his job for the speaker's seat in the State Duma, which held its first session Wednesday.

Naryshkin is also a Putin loyalist, and his move was seen as a government attempt to keep close tabs on the Duma, where Putin's United Russia party lost its two-thirds majority in the Dec. 4 elections. Two-thirds is needed to change the Constitution.

It was unclear who might replace Ivanov in the Cabinet, which Putin has promised to hand over to Medvedev if he wins the presidential election on March 4.

Vladislav Surkov, the Kremlin's first deputy chief of staff, had served as Naryshkin's temporary replacement before Ivanov's appointment. Surkov, the Kremlin's spin doctor par excellence, had been tipped in some media reports as a candidate to take the job full-time, as was ousted Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin.

But an unidentified Kremlin official said in an interview [published](#) Thursday in Kommersant that the Kremlin administration "will be headed by Naryshkin 2 — that is, a weak leader from Putin's inner circle."

Ivanov, 58, is one year Putin's junior and followed a similar career path. Also a native of St. Petersburg, he graduated from a university and KGB college and proceeded to become a staff officer at the KGB, where he first met Putin.

Ivanov worked in intelligence in the late 1970s and 1980s, serving in Finland and Kenya, and spent most of the 1990s at the central office of the Foreign Intelligence Service in Moscow.

His career took an upward turn when Putin became president in 2000, with Ivanov being appointed defense minister in 2001 and first deputy prime minister in 2005. When Putin became prime minister in 2008, he appointed Ivanov as one of his deputies, making him responsible for the military, aviation and space industries.

Ivanov was thrust under the spotlight before the 2008 presidential election, when he and Medvedev became the frontrunners for Putin's blessing as his successor. None of the trio has ever elaborated on why Putin chose to endorse Medvedev, while the media have weighed a variety of possible reasons, ranging from Ivanov's hard-line stance on graft to a car accident in which his eldest son, Alexander, struck and killed an elderly woman on a crosswalk in 2005. Prosecutors refused to charge Alexander Ivanov, saying he had been driving under the speed limit.

As defense minister, Ivanov oversaw a largely failed attempt to transform the conscription-based army into one filled with contract soldiers. His reputation was also tarnished by his initial dismissal of an incident in which a conscript, Andrei Sychyov, lost both legs and genitalia as a result of hazing by other soldiers.

He scored few achievements in Putin's government over the past four years, with the aviation and space industries plagued with mishaps, and the army and the military industry embroiled

in a complicated quarrel over the pricing and quality of military equipment. Moreover, Military Prosecutor General Sergei Fridinsky announced in May that 20 percent of all defense spending is lost to embezzlement every year.

Ivanov's years in charge of the Defense Ministry were "completely unsuccessful," said Alexander Golts, an independent defense analyst who writes a column for The Moscow Times.

"He kept the model of the Soviet mass-mobilized army in which hundreds of thousands of people are called up each year. This is a sign of inefficiency," Golts said by telephone.

But political analysts said what mattered most was Ivanov's proximity to Putin.

"Ivanov is one of Putin's people. The process of transferring power [from Putin to Medvedev] has begun," said Alexei Makarkin of the Center for Political Technologies.

"I think that Putin would like to control the election campaign himself," he said. "Since the presidential campaign is led by the Kremlin administration, he wants to have his own man in charge there."

As Kremlin chief of staff, Medvedev ran Putin's re-election campaign in 2004.

Belkovsky, the analyst, said the Ivanov-Naryshkin shuffle is preparation for Putin's own switch with Medvedev.

"Medvedev can barely tolerate Ivanov, but he likes Naryshkin, and it will be easy for him as prime minister to work with Naryshkin as the speaker," he said. "Putin, on the other hand, would rather work with Ivanov."

Staff writer Alexander Winning and interns Roman Shishov and Rina Soloveitchik contributed to this report.

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