

Medvedev Fires Yaroslavl, Perm Governors

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Sergei Vakhrukov **Sergei Porter**

The heads of Yaroslavl and Perm regions became the latest governors to be stripped of their duties by outgoing President Dmitry Medvedev, who has accepted resignations from a dozen regional chiefs since December.

Yaroslavl region Governor Sergei Vakhrukov and Perm region Governor Oleg Chirkunov left their posts voluntarily, according to statements posted Saturday on the Kremlin website.

Medvedev criticized Vakhrukov, who had served in his job since December 2007, on Friday at a meeting with members of ruling party United Russia for his choosing a candidate in the recent Yaroslavl mayoral election who ended up losing the vote to an opposition-backed candidate, RIA-Novosti reported. The president said Vakhrukov had chosen businessman Yakov Yakushev to run for United Russia instead of former Yaroslavl deputy mayor Sergei Yastrebov, who had won the party's primary vote.

Yakushev lost the April 1 election, garnering 27.8 percent of the vote compared to 69.6 percent

for municipal lawmaker Yevgeny Urlashov, who had the support of the political opposition.

On Saturday, Medvedev appointed Yastrebov acting Yaroslavl governor.

Chirkunov had been head of Perm region since December 2005. Medvedev appointed Regional Development Minister Viktor Basargin, one of the least prominent Cabinet ministers, as acting regional chief.

In recent months, Medvedev has also relieved of their posts governors from the Vologda, Arkhangelsk, Volgograd, Primorye, Saratov, Murmansk, Omsk, Kostroma, Smolensk and Moscow regions.

In his final televised interview as president on Thursday, Medvedev said over 50 percent of regional heads have been replaced over his time in office and said that even when official statements indicated that they resigned of their own free will, sometimes they were fired. He also said criminal cases have been opened against allegedly corrupt governors.

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