The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Mystery Shrouds Kremlin Award for Churov

May 03, 2012

Elections chief Vladimir Churov has become a controversial public figure since presiding over the recent parliamentary and presidential elections that opposition figures say were tainted by rampant voting fraud and falsifications. **Dmitry Abramov**

Correction appended

President Dmitry Medvedev handed out state honors to a cosmonaut, an ice hockey legend, Transaero's CEO and 54 other people during his last awards ceremony Thursday — but a big question lingered over whether elections chief Vladimir Churov also had received an award.

Churov — scorned as "the wizard" by middle class voters who accuse him of rigging the State Duma and presidential elections on behalf of President-elect Vladimir Putin — received the prestigious Order of St. Alexander Nevsky on Thursday, RIA-Novosti and RBK reported, citing unidentified officials in the Central Elections Commission.

The RBK source said Medvedev had signed the necessary decree.

No such decree was published on the Kremlin's website, and Churov's name was not on the Kremlin's awards list of 57 people.

Moreover, Medvedev handed the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky at Thursday's ceremony to Vasily Petrov, a World War II veteran who served for 70 years in the armed forces, rising from a cadet to first deputy defense minister and retiring with the rank of marshal.

News reports circulated late Thursday that the order might have been bestowed on Churov in secret, a gesture that would be more typical for intelligence officers than public servants.

Kremlin and elections commission spokespeople declined immediate comment.

Izvestia, citing an elections commission source, first reported in its Thursday edition that Churov would receive the award, and RIA-Novosti subsequently published a similar report, also citing a commission source.

Medvedev, who leaves office on Monday, has presented the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky to seven people — including former State Duma Speaker Boris Gryzlov, Patriarch Kirill and writer Valentin Rasputin — since he restored it in 2010.

The order, which recognizes people who have helped the country develop through years of honest service and outstanding results, was established by Catherine the First in 1725 and awarded almost continuously until 1991.

Among the other people whom Medvedev publicly recognized Thursday was cosmonaut Dmitry Kondratyev, who was decorated with the country's highest honor, the Hero of Russia, and the medal of Pilot-Cosmonaut of the Russian Federation for his work on the International Space Station.

Medvedev presented Vladislav Tretiak, president of the Russian Ice Hockey Federation and a former goaltender for the Soviet national team, with the order For Merit to the Fatherland 3rd Class and Transaero CEO Olga Pleshakova with the honored transportation worker medal.

One of the more colorful moments came when Medvedev honored a milkmaid from the Sakha republic with the For Merit to the Fatherland 4th Class for her 59 years of work on farms.

"I'm 73 years old. I have 11 children, 26 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren," Agrafena Sutakova, wearing a traditional violet and purple costume, said in her thank-you speech. She spoke in her native Yakut language, and an interpreter translated her remarks into Russian.

Noting that she continues to work as a milkmaid after 59 years, Sutakova dedicated her award to "all livestock producers who work in difficult conditions in the Northern Territory," Interfax reported.

Correction: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky was created by Catherine the Great; in fact, it was established by Catherine the First.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/03/mystery-shrouds-kremlin-award-for-churov-a14522