

Ex-Cabinet Figures Secure Cushy Posts

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Yevgeny Shkolov

Two Cabinet members who served under former President Dmitry Medvedev will spearhead efforts to pump life into the economies of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Tatyana Golikova, the former health and social development minister, will oversee the development of the two breakaway regions, and former colleague Elvira Nabiullina will be in charge of economic policy.

Their new placements were announced Wednesday and are part of the reshuffling of the government following President Vladimir Putin's inauguration.

Both moves are aimed at increasing the status of the presidential administration, which has become the major policy-implementing body.

Two other reassignments were announced Wednesday. Former Education Minister Andrei Fursenko will oversee grant support for scientists and former Communications and Press

Minister Igor Shchyogolev will be in charge of the IT sector, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The choice to make Golikova responsible for overseeing the two Georgian breakaway regions was likely based on her knowledge of finance. She has spent most of her career in that industry.

Peskov also said personnel decisions in the new government will be overseen by Yevgeny Shkolov, a former Interior Ministry official who was appointed assistant to the president, according to the Kremlin's website.

Shkolov worked alongside Putin in East Germany during his tenure in KGB foreign intelligence.

After leaving the Interior Ministry, Shkolov joined tank producer Uralvagonzavod. Managers at the company mobilized workers to support Putin during his presidential campaign.

Putin had already awarded an appointment to the head of the company's tank-producing unit, Igor Kholmanskikh, despite Kholmanskikh's lack of political experience.

Putin also named Alexander Beglov as his other envoy in the Central Federal District.

Beglov previously worked for the Kremlin's corruption watchdog. He replaces Oleg Govorun, who became the regional development minister.

The inclusion of so many former high-ranking officials is viewed as an effort to increase the power of the presidential administration, said Pavel Salin, a senior analyst for the Center for Current Politics.

He said the group as a whole might replicate what Igor Sechin, the former deputy prime minister, did during his tenure.

"They would be a sort of collective Sechin," Salin said.

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