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Putin to Choose State Company Executives

By Rachel Nielsen

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Until the new orders, only the prime minister, not the president, officially had the right to approve top management spots at companies including Rostelecom.

President Vladimir Putin has issued directives giving his administration the right to choose top executives at a slew of state corporations, including telecommunications giant Rostelecom and national news service RIA-Novosti.

While the president's office has exercised approval over management positions at these state companies for more than 10 years, the directives have now codified that authority, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

Until the new orders, only the prime minister, not the president, officially had the right to approve the top spots at these companies.

The decrees allow Putin to retain powers that he had as prime minister, said Nikolai Petrov,

a political analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center. It is possible that Putin doesn't want to relinquish powers "to a different Cabinet," meaning that of now-Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, he said.

Kommersant cited a federal official as saying the government's candidates for posts at state companies now will be vetted by both the Cabinet and the Kremlin.

In addition to Rostelecom, the president and prime minister will have such approval at project-financing institution Vneshekonombank, road contractor Rosavtodor, Sochi Olympics contractor Olimpstroi, the Deposit Insurance Agency, the Fund for Promoting Housing and Utilities Reform, scientific center Kurchatovsky Institute and telecom company Svyazinvest.

Svyazinvest is scheduled to be merged into Rostelecom by March 2013.

State media holdings affected by the directives are RIA-Novosti, newswire Itar-Tass, newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta and radio station Golos Rossii.

Putin signed the decree related to Svyazinvest and Rostelecom on July 12, while the decree for the other companies was issued on June 25, Kommersant said. The newspaper didn't name its federal government sources.

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