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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kremlin Affairs Chief Replaced

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Longtime head of the Russian Office of Presidential Affairs, Vladimir Kozhin, was dismissed from his job on Monday, the Kremlin's website reported.

His replacement is Alexander Kolpakov, former department head at the Presidential Security Service.

Kozhin will become a presidential aide overseeing military-industrial cooperation, the Kremlin said.

Kozhin, 55, a Chelyabinsk region native and engineer by education, entered state service in 1994.

He was never actively involved in politics, but since 2000 headed the Kremlin's office of affairs, a mammoth agency managing the assets of Russia's top state bodies, including the government, the parliament and top courts.

The organization had a budget of 87 billion rubles ($2.5 billion) as of 2011, the latest year for which it reported figures on its website.

The agency runs major development projects and was even linked in 2010 to "Putin's palace," a posh mansion that a whistleblower claimed was built for the president on protected land along the Black Sea coast. Kozhin denied involvement at the time.

Kozhin was also among the Russian officials blacklisted by the U.S. in March over Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula.

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