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Russians Think Putin, FSB and Military More Powerful Than Parliament

By Peter Spinella

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Putin is broadly viewed as Russia's most powerful man, a fact reflected in the windows of a trendy shirt shop.

Russians see President Vladimir Putin as the most powerful force in Russia, with the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the military trailing close behind, according to an opinion poll published Thursday.

Asked to rate the perceived power of certain political entities on a five-point scale, respondents gave the president an average score of 4.5, independent pollster the Levada Center said on its website.

Trailing about half a point behind were the FSB, a successor agency of the Soviet KGB, and the military. Putin worked for the KGB for about 15 years before entering politics.

The next most powerful, according to poll respondents, were the presidential administration

and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's Cabinet, followed by oligarchs and bankers, and the media.

The upper house of parliament, which approves draft legislation passed by the lower house, came in eighth. The lower house was 11th.

The Russian Orthodox Church, which in the past decade has gained considerable influence in the country, was 16th.

The poll was conducted on Jan. 23-26 among 1,600 adults across 46 Russian regions. The statistical margin of error did not exceed 3.4 percent, the pollster said.

Contact the author at p.spinella@imedia.ru

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