

# Putin Appoints Former Bodyguard Head of New National Guard

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) chairs a meeting, dedicated to the creation of a national guard at the Kremlin in Moscow.

President Vladimir Putin has appointed his former bodyguard and ex-chief of the country's interior troops as head of the newly formed National Guard service, according to a decree published on the Kremlin's website Tuesday evening.

The new commander, Viktor Zolotov, headed the president's security service from 2000 until 2013, when he was appointed as chief of the Interior Ministry's troops.

The National Guard will take over the forces and functions of Russia's elite riot police units — known in the country by their acronyms OMON and SOBR — among other Interior Ministry units, according to Putin's decree establishing the service earlier Tuesday.

The service is intended to combat terrorism and organized crime, the decree said.

But scores of Russian social network users predicted the new agency was also intended to suppress any political protests — a possibility that was welcomed by Kremlin supporters and denounced by its opponents.

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