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Putin Sacks Russian Governor Over Key-Dangling Video

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The head of Chuvashia drew criticism after video showed him dangling a set of keys to a fire engine above a firefighter, forcing him to jump. **cap.ru**

Update: President Vladimir Putin has dismissed Ignatyev from office a day after the governor was expelled from United Russia, Interfax reported Wednesday. An interim governor has been appointed in his place.

A Russian governor is facing expulsion from the country's ruling party following two weeks of controversial actions and comments, the Kommersant business daily reported Monday.

Mikhail Ignatyev, who heads the republic of Chuvashia 680 kilometers east of Moscow, made national headlines for saying critical journalists should be "wiped out" on Jan. 18. Ignatyev sparked fresh criticism Friday after video showed him dangling a set of keys to a fire engine above a firefighter, forcing him to jump in order to retrieve them.

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The United Russia ruling party's ethics committee will advise its regional branch to expel Ignatyev from its ranks Monday, an unnamed party source told Kommersant.

Following Kommersant's report, unnamed party leadership sources told the state-run TASS and RIA Novosti news agencies that United Russia had formally adopted the recommendation to oust Ignatyev.

The Chuvash administration's press service and the regional fire department defended Ignatyev's latest actions as a "friendly joke," saying the jumping firefighter is the governor's longtime acquaintance. Ignatyev also apologized for using the phrase "wipe out" in reference to journalists and said his words had been "distorted."

Related article: Russian Official Walks Back Call to 'Wipe Out' Critical Journalists

The Open Media online news outlet, citing unnamed sources close to the Kremlin, predicted Ignatyev would leave his position "within the next month or two" after the series of controversies. Other online outlets reported that Kremlin officials are still discussing Ignatyev's fate, which the outlets wrote will be decided later this week.

The Kremlin said it was aware of Ignatyev's actions but declined to comment on them, Interfax reported Monday.

Ignatyev's controversies follow a series of incidents where local officials have been caught insulting regular citizens, at times using terms like "excrement" and "riff-raff" to refer to them.

Russia's parliament last spring rejected a proposal to fine officials for disrespecting voters. Later in 2019, it passed a law that made "blatant disrespect" toward the authorities a criminal offense.

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