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Russian Olympic Committee Chief Announces Surprise Resignation

By AFP

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Stanislav Pozdnyakov. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

The head of Russia's Olympic Committee announced his resignation on Tuesday, a surprise move that comes as Moscow faces isolation in international sporting organizations over its invasion of Ukraine.

Stanislav Pozdnyakov, a five-time Olympic medallist, said in his resignation letter that there were "timely" reasons why Russian sport needed a new leader, but did not go into detail.

"Geopolitical challenges faced by our country dictate the need to optimize and centralize the management of key spheres of activity, including top-level sports," he said.

A professional fencer, Pozdnyakov was elected as the committee chief in 2018 as Russia faced a string of doping scandals that saw it barred the following year from a number of Olympic sports for four years.

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Pozdnyakov condemned the International Olympic Committee (IOC) ruling following Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine that Russian athletes could only compete at the Paris Olympics as neutrals, and he urged Russian athletes not to take part in those games.

After Putin announced a partial mobilization of reservists for the war in Ukraine, Pozdnyakov said athletes should consider "serving the Motherland" as an "honorable duty."

His daughter, Sofia Pozdniakova, who won two fencing gold medals in Tokyo, was one of those athletes who did not compete in Paris.

At those games, 15 Russian athletes participated under the neutral flag, returning with a single silver medal in the women's tennis doubles.

Moscow slammed the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics as a "massive failure" and has promised to host its own "Friendship Games."

Early elections to choose Pozdnyakov's successor will be set when the Russian Olympic Committee next meets on Nov. 7.

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