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Ex-Chechen Official Takes Over Danone's Russian Unit

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Ruslan Alisultanov. **grozmer.ru**

A former Chechen official is now the sole owner of Danone's Russian business after the French yogurt maker finalized its exit, Russia's Interfax news agency reported Monday, citing corporate data.

Danone announced its intention to leave Russia after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The Kremlin placed its Russian unit under temporary state management in July 2023, and Ruslan Alisultanov was named its chairman of the board.

Alisultanov previously served as deputy mayor of the Chechen capital of Grozny and Chechnya's deputy agriculture minister.

Russia's corporate database shows that Alisultanov became the formal owner of a company that consolidates Danone's former Russian assets, which have been rebranded to Health & Nutrition (H&N) on Dec. 6, according to Interfax.

“H&N confirms that Ruslan Alisultanov now owns 100% of Vamin-Tatarstan, which was renamed Yunimilk just prior to the deal,” Health & Nutrition’s press service was quoted as saying.

Alisultanov’s Yunimilk owns 99% of a company named Vamin R, which controls Health & Nutrition, according to the RBC business news website. Alisultanov personally owns the remaining 1% of Vamin R.

President Vladimir Putin in March removed Danone’s Russian unit from under the temporary management of the Federal Agency for State Property Management, where it had been since July 2023. In May, Danone completed the sale of its Essential Dairy and Plant-based business to Vamin R at a loss of 1.2 billion euros ($1.27 billion).

The terms of the deal have not been disclosed, but the Financial Times reported that Vamin had agreed to pay 17.7 billion rubles ($191.5 million at an earlier exchange rate), a 56% discount on Danone’s market value.

While under temporary state management between, Danone’s Russian unit was headed by Yakub Zakriev, a nephew of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Yunimilk’s predecessor, Vamin Tatarstan, was owned by a former Russian senator’s son Mintimer Mingazov.

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