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Relations Between Putin and Kadyrov Sour Over Secret Middle East Talks – IStories

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Vladimir Putin and Ramzan Kadyrov. **Ramzan Kadyrov / VK**

Relations between President Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov have soured in recent months after the Kremlin learned about alleged secret meetings between Kadyrov and officials in the Middle East, the investigative outlet IStories reported Thursday, citing former and current Russian security agents.

According to the report, Kadyrov has sought assurances from Middle Eastern officials to safeguard his family and assets should his rule over Chechnya end. While IStories does not specify the countries involved, it notes that Kadyrov has longstanding ties with "Muslim monarchies" in the region.

The Chechen leader is known to regularly travel to the United Arab Emirates, where past reporting claimed that he has used an elite villa on an artificial island of Palm Jumeirah as an unofficial Chechen "embassy" since at least 2014.

Kadyrov, who has ruled Chechnya with significant autonomy for nearly two decades in exchange for loyalty to the Kremlin, is believed to be preparing for a potential departure from power due to his worsening health. According to sources cited by IStories, he is suspicious of any guarantees offered by Moscow should he step down from office.

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Last year, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that Kadyrov suffers from a serious illness, possibly pancreatic necrosis. Kremlin PR experts have allegedly sought to conceal his condition from the public.

According to current and former Federal Security Service (FSB) officers who spoke to IStories on condition of anonymity, the intelligence service informed Putin of Kadyrov's "unauthorized" discussions with Middle Eastern officials regarding the safety of his relatives and assets.

Kadyrov's recent political maneuvering — including removing his daughter Aishat as Chechnya's deputy prime minister and transferring business assets to family members — has further fueled speculation that he may be preparing to step down as ruler of the North Caucasus region.

The reported rift between Putin and Kadyrov was also said to have impacted the Chechen leader's close ally, State Duma lawmaker Adam Delimkhanov.

Chechen Ansar Dishni told IStories that Delimkhanov had been "made aware of the limits of his abilities" amid the reported tensions.

The Moscow Times could not independently verify the IStories report.

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