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Putin Skips Memorial Service for Ex-Transportation Minister, Sends Wreath Instead

July 10, 2025



Sergei Savostyanov / TASS

Several senior Kremlin officials attended a memorial service on Thursday for former Transportation Minister Roman Starovoit, while President Vladimir Putin sent a wreath but did not attend in person.

Starovoit was found dead with a gunshot wound near a parking lot outside Moscow on Monday, just hours after Putin dismissed him from his post without explanation. Law enforcement authorities are treating the case as a suspected suicide.

Putin has yet to publicly comment on Starovoit's death. The Kremlin said earlier this week that the president had been "immediately informed" of the apparent suicide, but offered no further details.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday that Putin sent a wreath to the

farewell ceremony but declined to say who officially represented the Presidential Administration.

“There’s no obligation here, so I can’t say who went from the administration. It’s always a personal decision,” he said, adding that Putin’s work schedule prevented him from attending the event.

Related article: Who Was Roman Starovoit, the Sacked Transportation Minister Found Dead in Apparent Suicide?

A video published by the Kommersant business newspaper showed crowds gathered outside the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow, where the ceremony took place. The hospital is known for treating Russia’s political and business elite.

Among the attendees were Deputy Prime Ministers Dmitry Grigorenko, Alexander Novak and Dmitry Patrushev, as well as at least four cabinet ministers and the heads of major state transportation companies. Starovoit’s successor, Andrei Nikitin, was also present.

His funeral is expected to be held in St. Petersburg on Friday.

Starovoit was dismissed just one year after being appointed transportation minister. Before that appointment, he served as the governor of the southwestern Kursk region from 2018 to May 2024.

His removal and subsequent death have fueled speculation that he may have been facing criminal prosecution as part of an ongoing investigation into alleged corruption in the construction of border defenses in the Kursk region, which saw a major Ukrainian incursion last August.

While Starovoit had not been formally implicated in that investigation, Russian media cited unnamed sources as saying that suspects in the case, including his predecessor in the Kursk region, Alexei Smirnov, had recently testified against him.

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