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South Ossetian Leader Steps Down to Become Putin Adviser

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South Ossetia's outgoing president Alan Gagloyev and Vladimir Putin. **Kremlin**

The leader of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia stepped down on Tuesday to become an adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, weeks after the ratification of a major integration agreement with Moscow.

"Today, our task is to fulfill our cherished dream — to overcome our fate as a divided people and reunite with North Ossetia, reunite with Great Russia," South Ossetia's Moscow-backed president, Alan Gagloyev, said in a video address.

"I have given my support to our historic leader, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, and I am ready to stand alongside him," he said, adding that he would immediately begin work as an adviser to the Kremlin leader.

Gagloyev, who took office in 2022, said that Marat Kambolov would serve as interim president. Kambolov, a native of the republic of North Ossetia in Russia's North Caucasus, is a former Moscow bureaucrat who was recently appointed as South Ossetia's prime minister.

The leadership shuffle comes on the heels of an agreement ratified last month by Putin, which seeks to align South Ossetia's laws closer to Russia's.

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Under the deal, Moscow commits to providing social support benefits to the local population and boosting living standards. Putin emphasized the trade, economic and social cooperation of the arrangement, while Gagloyev hailed it as "the beginning of the reunification of the Ossetian people."

In Georgia, both the ruling Georgian Dream party and opposition factions have slammed the integration agreement as part of what they say is the de facto annexation of South Ossetia by Moscow.

Gagloyev said Tuesday that, as a Kremlin adviser, he would work alongside Putin to help in the implementation of the integration deal.

South Ossetia, along with the Black Sea region of Abkhazia, is recognized internationally as part of Georgia but has been under de facto Russian control since the two countries fought a brief war in August 2008. Russia maintains military bases in both breakaway territories.

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