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Putin's Longtime Ally Sergei Ivanov Dies at 73

June 26, 2026



Sergei Ivanov. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Sergei Ivanov, a former Russian defense minister, Kremlin chief of staff and longtime ally of President Vladimir Putin, has died at the age of 73, the VTB United League basketball organization, where he served as honorary president, said Friday.

The professional men's basketball league did not disclose the cause of death. The exiled news outlet Meduza reported that Ivanov was rumored to be suffering from a severe, long-term illness.

Putin expressed his "deep condolences" to Ivanov's friends and relatives in a brief, one-sentence statement published on the Kremlin's website.

Ivanov and Putin first met in the 1970s while both were serving in the Leningrad directorate of the KGB. While Putin transitioned into local politics by joining the St. Petersburg mayor's office in the 1990s, Ivanov remained in the intelligence services, rising to become a senior officer in the Foreign Intelligence Service.

The pair reunited in the late 1990s as Putin rose through the federal government. Putin named Ivanov his deputy at the FSB security service in 1998 and subsequently appointed him secretary of Russia's Security Council after becoming prime minister in 1999.

Ivanov went on to serve as defense minister from 2001 to 2007, spanning nearly the entirety of Putin's first two presidential terms. During Dmitry Medvedev's single presidential term, Ivanov served as deputy prime minister under then-Prime Minister Putin between 2008 and 2011.

In late 2011, Medvedev named Ivanov chief of staff of the Presidential Administration, a powerful role he held until 2016, when Putin moved him to the position of special representative for environmental protection and transportation.

Putin dismissed Ivanov from that post in February, less than a week after he turned 73, which is three years past the standard mandatory retirement age for civil servants.

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