

Murov to Remain on Guard to 2012

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President Dmitry Medvedev has signed an order to keep Yevgeny Murov as head of the Federal Guard Service, or FSO, until 2012, even though the general will reach the maximum age for military personnel later this year.

According to the law on military service, which regulates the activity of FSO employees, Murov should be required to step down as a Ground Forces general when he turns 65 in November.

This spring, an official close to the presidential administration told Vedomosti that the Kremlin was looking for a way to keep him in place. One option they considered was having his first deputy, 60-year-old Alexander Belyakov, take over as director while Murov would receive an honorary post that would allow him to remain in control of the service.

A source close to the Federal Security Service, or FSB, said a battle had begun for Murov's post, with security forces from Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's circle lobbying to give the job to Viktor Voronin, deputy head of the FSB's economic crimes department.

But later, an official close to the Kremlin administration said word had gotten out that Medvedev signed an order last year extending Murov's service for three more years. An official in the presidential administration confirmed that the order was signed and called the rumors about replacing Murov "the intrigues of enemies."

FSO spokesman Sergei Devyatov declined comment.

There were no formal violations when Medvedev signed the order prolonging Murov's service, since he was 64 at the time, State Duma Deputy Alexander Khinshtein said.

It has already been decided that once Murov turns 65, he will retire from military service and continuing working as a civilian official, said another source close to the FSO.

The maximum age for civilian officials is also 65, but there is no age limit for people holding so-called state positions, such as ministers, said Pavel Kudyukin, a lecturer on public administration at the Higher School of Economics. Thus, a presidential order giving the director of the FSO the same rank as ministers would allow him to stay on the job, he said.

Murov — unlike his deputy Viktor Zolotov, who heads Putin's security detail — has never tried to get involved in politics, said Andrei Soldatov, an analyst at Agentura.ru who tracks the security services. Murov scored an organizational victory in 2002 by winning control for the FSO of the special communications networks after the elimination of the Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information.

Maintaining stability ahead of the 2012 presidential elections is the main goal guiding the Kremlin, political analyst Yevgeny Minchenko said. Murov has regularly demonstrated his loyalty to both leaders, and as the head of one of the powerful state clans, his exit could disrupt the balance within the security agencies, he said.

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