

Putin to Dismiss 5% of Staff Within Weeks

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The federal government will trim its staff by 5 percent to 1,453 by late March to abide by presidential orders, a spokesman for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told reporters Friday.

Another 5 percent of the staff will be dismissed next year, and 10 percent more will lose their jobs by 2013, said the spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, Interfax reported.

He did not elaborate on who will be shown the door.

The plans follow deadlines for dismissals outlined in an anti-bureaucracy, anti-corruption decree signed by Medvedev on Dec. 31. The decree calls for 20 percent of federal officials to be fired by April 2013.

Some 120,500 bureaucrats are expected to be sacked under the order. There were almost 880,000 federal officials nationwide in 2009, up from 522,500 in 2000, the State Statistics Service reported on its web site.

Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin said last fall that the move would save the budget up to 43 billion rubles (\$1.4 billion) a year. Medvedev's decree instructed the government to use half the money saved because of staff cuts to boost the salaries of officials who kept their jobs.

Putin tried to combat the swelling bureaucracy during his own presidency, slashing the number of federal ministries from 23 to 14 after his re-election to a second term as president in 2004. But the figure has since crept back to 17 as some newly created federal agencies were turned into ministries.

The total number of civil servants in the country rose from 1.16 million to 1.67 million between 2000 and 2009, even though the national population shrunk throughout the 2000s, according to the State Statistics Service.

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