

Space Agency Chief Plans to Stay Put

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Federal Space Agency head Anatoly Perminov said Wednesday that he has no plans to leave his post, shrugging off comments by Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov that he would retire soon.

Perminov, scolded by President Dmitry Medvedev over the loss of three Glonass satellites in December, said his schedule remained packed for the month, with upcoming celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Soviet launch of the first man into space and a meeting with NASA chief Charles Bolden on April 15, Ekho Moskvyy radio reported.

He added, however, that he was ready to step aside if ordered by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

"I will not cling to this post," he told Itar-Tass. "As the prime minister decides, so be it."

Ivanov told reporters during a visit to Washington this week that Perminov would leave after seven years at the helm of the Federal Space Agency because he had reached mandatory retirement age, which is 60 for civil servants.

Perminov will turn 66 in June.

Medvedev has waived the retirement requirement in the past, although he has not indicated whether he will do so again for Perminov this year.

Medvedev gave Perminov a dressing down after a malfunctioning Proton rocket failed to put the Glonass satellites into orbit. But problems have continued to plague the space program, with the December accident followed by the loss of the GEO-IK-2 military satellite on Feb. 1.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Wednesday that Perminov might be replaced by his deputy, Anatoly Davydov, or the head of procurements for the Defense Ministry, Oleg Frolov.

Igor Marinin, editor of Novosti Kosmonavtiki, an influential industry magazine, said by telephone that he believed the post would go to Deputy Defense Minister Vladimir Popovkin, a former commander of the Space Forces.

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