

Bilalov to Lose 'All Positions'

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If President Vladimir Putin's word is the law, then Akhmed Bilalov will have to give up at least three jobs: deputy president of the Russian Olympic Committee, president of the North Caucasus Resorts state corporation and, well, president of the [Russian Golf Association](#).

Putin clearly had the first two in mind when he ordered the government to fire Bilalov from "all positions" Thursday after blaming him a day earlier for delays and cost overruns at an Olympic ski jump site in Sochi.

Bilalov's headshot lingered on the websites of both the Russian [Olympic Committee](#) and [North Caucasus Resorts](#) on Thursday, and Resorts spokeswoman Tamara Bigayeva told The Moscow Times that "nothing was clear" about his future at the corporation's helm.

But few doubt that the colorful businessman's career has taken a serious dent after Putin singled him out as a scapegoat for the highly visible construction ills ahead of the Winter Olympics, Putin's pet project and an object of national prestige for the government.

Bilalov's career seemed to destine him for those positions. A native of Dagestan, he rose to prominence in Moscow as a banker in the 1990s and a co-owner of Nafta-Moskva, an oil company that is better described as an investment vehicle for Suleiman Kerimov, Dagestan's most prominent businessman.

Bilalov entered politics in 1999, when he was elected to the State Duma. In 2007, he traded his Duma seat for membership in Krasnodar's regional parliament, and in 2011 he was sent to Moscow as a Federation Council senator, a post he gave up last fall.

Last month, the jovial Bilalov hosted an investor party in Davos, Switzerland, for the North Caucasus Resorts project, which excludes Sochi's Olympic facilities and is no easy sell, given the region's instability and Islamist insurgency.

As early as last week, he presented his latest project: a ski resort in mountainous Ingushetia, which, being on the border with Georgia, is accessible only with a special permit from the Federal Security Service.

Analysts speculated Thursday that Bilalov had become the victim of the ongoing struggle between liberals and conservatives in the federal government. The ethnic Avar is a cousin of the brothers Ziyavudin and Magomed Magomedov, two powerful Moscow-based businessmen close to Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich.

"Someone whispered in Putin's ear that Bilalov doesn't build well and takes more [bribes] than he deserves," Vladimir Pribylovsky of the Panorama think tank [wrote on his blog](#).

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