

Putin Signs Order Reshuffling Powers Among Ministries

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Putin agreed and signed off on an order abolishing the Regional Development Ministry, which was created 10 years ago.

President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev agreed on a major reshuffling of government agencies on Monday that would see the Regional Development Ministry abolished and state defense procurement agencies merged with the Defense Ministry.

The move was first suggested by Medvedev as a means to optimize the functioning of state agencies. At a meeting with Putin on Monday, Medvedev explained the move by saying that "further work of the Regional Development Ministry would be inexpedient," according to a transcript on the Kremlin's website.

Putin agreed and signed off on an order abolishing the ministry, which was created 10 years ago to oversee the federal policy of regional development, including in the Far North and the Arctic. The ministry was also in charge of inter-ethnic relations in the country, protecting

indigenous small-numbered peoples in Russia, and urban planning, among other things.

Following the creation of several region-specific ministries in recent years, a large share of the Regional Development Ministry's powers had been distributed among the Far East Development Ministry, the Ministry for North Caucasus Affairs and the Ministry for Crimean Affairs.

Some of the ministry's functions will now be transferred to the Economic Development Ministry, the recently-created Construction Ministry and the Culture Ministry.

Medvedev said the move would not have a negative impact on the government's work, noting that "nothing is lost in the process, but we can optimize the organizational structure and perhaps even reduce excessive management personnel. This is a continual task," according to a transcript of the meeting posted on the Kremlin's website.

The reshuffling also entails the abolishment of two state arms procurement agencies, Rosoboronzakaz, which dealt with the supplies of arms and other military equipment, and Rosoboronpostavka, which dealt with government defense contracts. Most of their duties will now be transferred to the Defense Ministry, as well as the Interior Ministry and the Emergency Situations Ministry.

In 2011, Russia embarked on a state arms procurement program that envisages a thorough revamp of Russia's military forces for a total cost of over 19 trillion rubles (\$512 billion).

The reshuffling came into effect as soon as Putin signed off on the executive orders on Monday.

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