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The Russian Federation: Igor Sechin leaves Rosneft

On 11 April the deputy prime minister, Igor Sechin, announced that he was stepping down as the chairman of the supervisory board of the state-owned oil company Rosneft. The reason for his resignation was the necessity to fulfil the order of President Medvedev from 2 April that banned officials in the rank of deputy prime ministers and ministers from taking positions in 17 state-owned companies. The fact that Sechin is leaving Rosneft means a certain weakening of his position in the Russian ruling elite but it will not affect the influence the government has on the management of one of the most important Russian companies.

The official objective of President Medvedev's order was the improvement of the investment climate in Russia. However, the genuine motive for issuing the document is an attempt to limit the influence of selected high-ranking officials on key state-run companies. Igor Sechin was one of the main targets of the president's order as a person overseeing the Russian oil sector and considered one of the most influential figures in the ruling elite (he is accused of leading to the bankruptcy of Yukos). Relations between President Medvedev and Deputy Prime Minister Sechin are believed not to be excellent. Despite Sechin's resignation it may be expected that he will want to maintain an informal influence on Rosneft by means of his collaborators. According to the daily *Kommersant* (on 12 April) Sechin's successor in the position of chairman of the supervisory board will be Sergei Shishin, the general of the Federal Security Service and the present vice president of Vneshtorgbank. A change in relations between the state and big business should not therefore be expected. <WojK>