

President Medvedev intervenes in conflict within Russian law enforcement establishment.

On 31 March, President Dmitri Medvedev attempted to settle the conflict between the head of the Investigative Committee, Aleksandr Bastrykin, and the Attorney General Yuri Chayka, whose son has been accused of supporting illegal gambling activities. The President's direct intervention in the activity of the law enforcement agencies should be seen as an attempt to discipline their leaders, and as a warning of the negative consequences to the country's image if the conflict among the government's ruling team is made public. The President's intervention is also a sign of the ongoing deterioration in the relationship between representatives of the political elite, in the run-up to next year's planned presidential elections.

As a result of the operation which the Federal Security Service carried out in February to combat illegal gambling in Moscow, fifteen illegal casinos were broken up; they were thought to have made about US\$10 million per year for their owners. According to the FSS and the Investigative Committee, this racket was a cover for at least ten prosecutors and several prominent police officers, as well as Artyom Chayka, the son of the Attorney General. The General Public Prosecutor's Office reacted by making an ineffective attempt to stop the investigation. The recently revealed conflicts within the internal security apparatus are to a large extent a manifestation of the ambition and agitation of its leading personnel. It can be assumed that these conflicts have been caused by concerns as to who will run the various departments in a potentially new configuration after a new president is elected in 2012. President Medvedev's reaction has been clear; for the first time in his term of office, he has taken the position of arbiter in a dispute between the different law enforcement agencies. He is working to resolve the conflict, but has made no attempts to weaken any of the parties, since this could threaten to destabilise the state's security system. <peż>