

Russian defence minister has gained control over defence procurement

On 13 June, by a decree of President Dmitri Medvedev, the head of the federal agency for the provision of arms, equipment and materials (Rosoboronpostavka), Viktor Cherkessov, was fired. A month earlier, the agency he directed, which hitherto had been subordinate to the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, was subjected to the defence ministry. This decision has strengthened the position of the defence minister Anatoly Serdyukov; now he has taken exclusive control over state defence procurement, the independence which the other departments of force had had in this field will now be curtailed.

The creation of the Rosoboronpostavka agency in 2007 was intended to increase the efficiency of state defence procurement and the supervision of expenditures. It was also intended to limit corruption (which, among other things, is linked to the production costs which the arms industry businesses are known to exaggerate). In reality, the agency's operation was boycotted by all the departments of force, who wanted to keep their independence regarding how they used the budget resources allocated to them. Most defence procurement (80%) was handled by the Rosoboronzakaz agency subordinate to the defence ministry. This prevented Rosoboronpostavka from successful supervision and coordination of procurement for the whole defence industry, independently of the Ministry of Defence. The minister of defence's current takeover of all procurement demonstrates his strong position in the government elite. In this context, the departure of Cherkessov, a former head of the federal anti-drugs service and an apologist for chekism, can be seen as confirmation of the ongoing rivalry between the heads of the Russian departments of force for influence on the distribution of budget resources. <pez>