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[Redacted] **Russia: Head of Independent TV Network Fired**

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18 January 2003

The Board of Directors of Gazprom-Media yesterday dismissed the head of NTV, Russia's largest nonstate television network, as general director of the network's parent company, according to press reports. He almost certainly will lose his NTV position in the near future. The director and NTV have been under fire from President Putin and other officials since the Moscow hostage crisis last October [Redacted]

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— Most independent observers characterized NTV's coverage as the best of the major Russian networks, but [Redacted] presidential chief of staff Voloshin and Press Minister Lesin had shown Putin selective excerpts to make it appear that the network had endangered the rescue operation [Redacted]

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The Putin administration has worked steadily during the past three years to limit information flows and political debate. Managing the television networks—the medium through which most Russians receive their news—has been a top priority. [Redacted]

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- According to press reports, Kremlin officials meet weekly with the heads of the main federal television networks to instruct them how to cover certain stories.
- Control of network news will be crucial in shaping public perceptions going into the Duma campaign this year and the presidential election next year. Kremlin officials are concerned about the electoral chances of the pro-Putin United Russia party, which has stalled in the polls, according to Russian press reports. [Redacted]

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The dismissal appears to be a victory for the Yeltsin-era Kremlin faction, including Voloshin and Lesin, which has remained in place under Putin. This faction has fought opponents linked to the security services and their business allies for influence and assets. A bank reportedly associated with the security services last fall bought 49 percent of NTV's parent company, suggesting the struggle for control of NTV is not over. [Redacted]

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