

Zatlers takes over in Latvia

by UPI

RIGA, Latvia -- Valdis Zatlers has taken the helm as president of Latvia with a cloud of scandal hovering over him.

Zatlers, 52, a non-career politician who was elected by the Latvian Parliament in May, was inaugurated Sunday.

But the former chief of the Riga Traumatology and Orthopedics Hospital recently admitted failing to declare income he received from his patients and was fined \$500. The State Revenue Service and the Anti-Corruption Bureau are investigating whether charges are warranted.

He pledged to work for the benefit of the nation's people and increase prosperity with help from other European countries.

"The strong European Union and NATO are the guarantee of Latvia's prosperity and security," said Zatlers, who succeeds Vaira Vike-Freiberga, who served eight years.

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