

Putin Gets Birthday Wishes From Belarussian President

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A political tussle between Minsk and Moscow took a new twist Thursday when Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko congratulated Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on his birthday after snubbing President Dmitry Medvedev's birthday last month.

But an anti-Lukashenko campaign will resume Friday on state-controlled NTV television with the airing of the fourth part of the "Krestny Batka" (which can be translated as "The Belarussian Godfather") documentary.

The new installment, called "Last Autumn," will feature a story about Lukashenko evading prison time by becoming a lawmaker, as well as an interview with a member of the Belarussian "death squad" responsible for the staged suicide of local opposition journalist Oleg Bebenin in September and other murders, NTV said in a preview of the program, without elaborating.

The first three parts of "Krestny Batka" were aired in the summer and angered Lukashenko, who called the series a smear campaign against him ahead of December's presidential election

in which he hopes to win a new five-year term.

Lukashenko, who has served as president since 1994, did not comment on NTV's broadcast plans Thursday.

In his address to Putin, published on the Belarussian president's [web site](#), he said: "I am convinced that your rich experience and reputation as a leader will continue to contribute to the strengthening of our partnership."

Putin celebrated his 58th birthday in his native St. Petersburg, where he held meetings with education and trade union officials, Itar-Tass [reported](#). He planned to spend the evening with family.

Medvedev turned 45 on Sept. 14, but Lukashenko was one of the few leaders of former Soviet republics not to congratulate him, Gazeta.ru [reported](#).

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