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Archived Live Blog: Putin's Inauguration and Street Protests

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Vladimir Putin's presidential inauguration ceremony was held in the Kremlin on Monday. Opposition demonstrators gathered blocks away on Nikitsky Bulvar and Tverskoi Bulvar, after being blocked from their intended destination of Manezh Square next to the Kremlin. Police detained over 100 demonstrators, while other protesters moved to different locations around the city chanting slogans and staging sit-ins.

8:15 p.m., Dozens of Arrests Near Presidential Administration Offices: Police have detained dozens of demonstrators who gathered at Staraya Ploshchad near the presidential administration office buildings, Interfax reported. Multiple vans filled with protesters have departed from the square, apparently headed to police stations.

Moscow Times reporter Kevin O'Flynn was detained for about 10 minutes, he wrote on Twitter. He said police apologized when releasing him.

Police on the scene are telling those gathered that no demonstration was approved for today and are asking people to disperse.

A photograph by Moscow Times reporter Kevin O'Flynn from inside a police van:



7:18 p.m., Putin Signs More Than Dozen Orders Within Hours of Taking Office: Newly sworn-in President Vladimir Putin has signed more than a dozen decrees on topics ranging from demographic policy and housing issues to the defense industry and economic policy.

Most of the orders give specific deadlines for work to be done by the next government, expected to be led by former President Dmitry Medvedev. Many of the instructions appear to be aimed at carrying out proposals Putin made in his series of campaign articles published in the months leading up to the March 4 presidential election.

All the orders Putin signed Monday can be seen in Russian on the Kremlin website here.

7:03 p.m., Protesters Move to Kitai Gorod Neighborhood: Opposition protesters have gathered near the presidential administration offices at Staraya Ploshchad, near metro station Kitai Gorod, according to tweets from journalists on the scene. Slon.ru correspondent Vera Kichanova tweeted just before 7 p.m.: "We're at Staraya Ploshchad near the monument to the heroes of Plevna, sitting peacefully, right this second a ring of OMON [riot police] is surrounding us in a circle."

6:52 p.m., Navalny, Udaltsov Fined 1,000 Rubles for Actions at Sunday Protest: Opposition leaders Alexei Navalny and Sergei Udaltsov, who were jailed overnight after being detained by

police at Sunday's demonstration at Bolotnaya Ploshchad, were each fined 1,000 rubles for disobeying police orders and released, RIA-Novosti reported Monday.

Neither Navalny nor Udaltsov admitted guilt in their cases, saying they did not disobey police orders.

Sentences reportedly varied for other demonstrators who had been detained Sunday. Navalny tweeted that a man jailed with him received five days' administrative arrest "for nothing."

Meanwhile, at Chistoprudny Bulvar, where demonstrators had gathered Monday afternoon, is now largely empty of protesters, Interfax reported. Those who remain are mostly police and journalists, the news agency said. A group from pro-Kremlin youth organization Nashi who were in the area have left.

6:01 p.m., Street Demonstrators Arrested 'At Random': Police continue to detain opposition demonstrators who have congregated at a pedestrian area on Chistaprudny Bulvar, apparently without cause. Police have approached demonstrators and led them into nearby vans without providing a reason for their detainment, Moscow Times correspondent Jon Earle reported from the scene. There have been no official reports on the number of people detained. "Few" people remain at the scene, Interfax reported, citing a correspondent on the scene.

Earlier Monday, around 120 demonstrators were arrested at Tverskoi Bulvar.

3:31 p.m., Putin Appoints Medvedev Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers Leave Posts: State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin said Monday that President Vladimir Putin has nominated former President Dmitry Medvedev to the post of prime minister, as was widely expected. The Duma is scheduled to vote on Medvedev's candidacy to the job of government head on Tuesday at 3 p.m. during a special session, RIA-Novosti reported. Medvedev has been named the likely next leader of ruling party United Russia, which has a majority in the Duma, and he is expected to be confirmed by parliament as prime minister.

First Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Zubkov on Monday signed an order relieving all Cabinet ministers of their duties, as required by the constitution, Interfax reported. The Cabinet includes 25 ministers, including seven deputy prime ministers.

2:18 p.m., Putin Says Russia Will Be an 'Open, Honest, and Predictable Partner': In a short speech after being sworn in as president, Vladimir Putin said Dmitry Medvedev helped spur the creation of a stable economic foundation and a "responsible" civil society and said Russia is entering a new stage of development.

Putin, who is serving as president for a third time and just served for four years as prime minister, began his speech by reiterating his dedication to public service.

"I consider it my life's purpose and my debt to serve the fatherland, to serve our people, the support of which inspires and assists in resolving the most complex and difficult problems," Putin said.

He said Medvedev's presidency had ensured stable development and said the now former

president had initiated the "modernization," a buzzword of Medvedev's, of "all aspects of our lives."

Putin said the country faced fundamentally new problems in their nature and scale and referred to some of the areas of concern and ambition he has touched on frequently in recent months, including Russia's oil-based economy, demographic problems, development of the Far East and the country's role as a regional leader.

"And we all must understand that the lives of future generations, the historical prospective of government and our nation, depend now on us, on actual successes in the creation of a new economy and modern standards of living, on our efforts to care for people and support Russian families, on our persistence in developing the enormous Russian expanses from the Baltic to the Pacific Ocean, on our ability to become leaders and a center of attraction in all of Eurasia," Putin said.

As he has in the past, Putin expressed his commitment to democratic principles.

"We want and will live in a democratic country, where everyone has the freedom and space to contribute talent and labor, his efforts," Putin said.

Putin said the country should be "successful" and respected in the world as a "reliable, open, honest and predictable partner."

The newly sworn-in president concluded his speech by comparing Russia's past to its future.

"We are prepared for future tests and future achievements. Russia has a grand history and a no less grand future. And we will work with faith in our soul, with sincere and pure intentions," he said.

1:14 p.m., 120 Arrests in City Center: Around 120 demonstrators including opposition leader Boris Nemtsov have been detained by police in central Moscow, a police spokesman told Interfax. All those arrested have been taken to police stations, where police have holding a "preventive discussion" about the need not to "disrupt public order," after which they will be released.

Moscow Times reporter on the scene Jonathan Earle said around 100 opposition protesters remain on Tverskoi Bulvar and are currently moving in the direction of Chistiye Prudy. He said members of pro-Kremlin youth groups are also in the area.

1:00 p.m., Demonstrations in City Center: Anti- and pro-Putin protesters are rallying on Tverskoi Bulvar in central Moscow, our correspondent Roland Oliphant is reporting on Twitter. He wrote that activists from pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi have been detained by police. Guardian correspondent Miriam Elder tweeted that riot police have gathered on the Bulvar and are blocking protesters from marching.

A photo of demonstrators by our reporter Roland Oliphant:



12:51 p.m., Medvedev Says He Worked to Create Dialogue With Public: Before the swearing-in ceremony for Putin, now former President Dmitry Medvedev gave a short speech in which he said he was proud of "involving citizens in political life" and said it was important that the direction he had led the country be built upon in years to come.

"Only in that way will we build a strong democratic government, where the law and social justice triumph, where security is ensured, where opportunities are created for a person's self-actualization, of his entrepreneurial, civil and creative initiatives," Medvedev said, according to a transcript of the speech posted on the Kremlin website.

He said he worked as president "openly and honestly, in the interests of people, doing everything so that people are free."

Medvedev said he thought one of his key achievements as president was getting people involved in the political life of the country, perhaps referring to his "Big Government" initiative to get a range of business and social leaders to contribute policy ideas, or to his meetings in recent months with leaders of the political opposition. He also said it was vital that government be open to dialogue and collaboration with citizens.

"It is fundamentally important that authorities became more open to dialogue and to cooperation. Government, after all, cannot be effective without feedback with people, without taking into account the initiatives that form in society. In my work, I was always guided by that," Medvedev said.

12:28 p.m., Guests Reach Out to Congratulate Putin: Putin gave a short speech after being sworn in as president—we'll have details on what he said shortly. After his speech, a 30-gun salute sounded from the Kremlin Naberezhnaya and Putin kissed his wife Lyudmila, who was in fact in attendance, and Svetlana Medvedeva, the former first lady. He then began his long walk down the red carpet to Cathedral Square, where he is currently inspecting the Presidential Regiment. During his walk, guests began reaching out to shake Putin's hand, and it took him a few minutes to accept the congratulations of 50 or so people.

12:10 p.m., Putin Sworn In as President: Putin has taken the oath of office, and Constitutional Court head Valery Zorkin has sworn him in as president. The national anthem is currently being played in the Grand Kremlin Palace where the ceremony is taking place.

12:02 p.m., No First Lady? The Times' Tony Halpin notes on Twitter the apparent absence of Vladimir Putin's wife Lyudmila. Putin seems to be driving to the Kremlin without her and Pervy Kanal television has not shown her inside the Grand Kremlin Palace or mentioned her.

Putin has said he does not want the media to have access to his wife, and she and their two daughters are virtually never seen in public.

Meanwhile, the inauguration ceremony has begun. Dmitry Medvedev is speaking about the role of the president.

11:54 a.m., Putin Heading to Kremlin From White House: After the special version of the constitution (see below) was formally brought into the Grand Kremlin Palace by soldiers, three top officials took the stage in the hall where the inauguration ceremony will take place: Federation Council speaker Valentina Matvienko, State Duma speaker Sergei Naryshkin, and Constitutional Court head Valery Zorkin, who will deliver the oath of office to Putin.

Outgoing President Dmitry Medvedev drove into the Kremlin and thanked the Presidential Regiment, assembled in Cathedral Square in the Kremlin, for their service.

Putin was shown a few minutes ago exiting his office in the White House and getting into a limousine that is now taking him to the Kremlin.

11:42 a.m., Anti-Putin Protesters Gather: As the presidential inauguration ceremony begins in

the Grand Kremlin Palace, anti-Putin protesters and riot police have begun to gather in the city center, Guardian correspondent Miriam Elder tweeted.

Blue Buckets Danila Lindele tweeted that police have begun to detain people on Nikitsky Bulvar, a few blocks from the Kremlin, outside the restaurant Jean-Jacques, a popular hangout among opposition protest organizers and journalists:



11:31 a.m., Presidential Regiment Ceremony Rehearsal: The elite Presidential Regiment military unit, which will take part in the inauguration ceremony, was shown by Pervy Kanal television rehearsing their presentation:



11:25 a.m., Special Table for Kremlin Constitution: Pervy Kanal television is running a program on the swearing-in ceremony, during which Putin will take the oath of office with his hand on what the channel said is a unique version of the country's constitution, bound in red leather with gold writing. The constitution is kept in a library in the Kremlin, in a glass case inside a table specially designed specifically for the purpose of holding the document.

11:20 a.m., Details of Reception Meal Still Secret: Office of Presidential Affairs spokesman Viktor Khrekov told Kommersant-FM radio this morning that he would not reveal the menu that guests of the inauguration ceremony would be served, saying: "When you're a guest going to someone's home for a meal, you don't ask what you're going to eat. You come and find out what it is there." He did say that there will be from 600 to 700 people in attendance at the meal and that the cost, together with all administrative expenses, was 10 million rubles ($335,000). He added that the menu will be based around Russian cuisine and will use Russian ingredients.

Media reports in recent months, citing state tender orders posted online, have speculated that dishes could include mussels with vegetable pancakes and mushroom sauce, stuffed sturgeon with champagne sauce, and coconut milk cappuccino.

11:12 a.m., Six National TV Channels to Air Inauguration Ceremony: Six national state-controlled television channels will be airing the presidential inauguration beginning at 11:30 a.m. You can watch online on Pervy Kanal television's live feed.

Here, a Pervy Kanal reporter is shown walking through the hall in the Grand Kremlin Palace in which the ceremony will take place:



10:59 a.m., Inauguration Guests Gathering in Kremlin: Guests of Vladimir Putin's inauguration ceremony have begun to gather outside the Grand Kremlin Palace, where the ceremony will take place (photograph from Pervy Kanal television):



10:50 a.m., 2,000-3,000 Guests at Inauguration, Presidential Candidates to Attend: Strangely enough, the Kremlin published a news release with details regarding the presidential inauguration only this morning at 9 a.m., three hours before the event is scheduled to take place. The statement said there will be around 3,000 guests at the ceremony; Office of Presidential Affairs spokesman Viktor Khrekov said on Kommersant-FM radio at 10:40 a.m. that there will be around 2,000 people in attendance.

The statement said guests will include Cabinet members, State Duma deputies, Federation Council members, Constitutional Court judges, and other state officials, as well as runner-up presidential candidates, foreign ambassadors, and religious, cultural and social figures and leaders.

The ceremony will begin with outgoing President Dmitry Medvedev saying farewell to the elite Presidential Regiment military unit on Cathedral Square in the Kremlin.

Vladimir Putin will then take the oath of office and be sworn in as president by Constitutional Court head Valery Zorkin.

After being sworn in and becoming the country's commander-in-chief, Putin will immediately be given the nuclear codes.

Khrekov said Putin will give a short speech at the ceremony.

A presentation of the Presidential Regiment on Cathedral Square will conclude the ceremony.

10:25 a.m., Manezh Square Cordoned Off; 'Manezhka' Trending; Kutuzovsky Prospekt, Novy Arbat Closed: Manezh Square, adjacent to the Kremlin at the south end of Tverskaya Ulitsa, has been barricaded off by police in preparation for Vladimir Putin's arrival to the Kremlin for his inauguration ceremony. Opposition protesters are calling for a demonstration at Manezh

at 10 or 11 a.m. to protest the ceremony; the hashtag "#манежка," or "manezhka" has led the top Russian-language Twitter trends this morning.

The roads Novy Arbat and Kutuzovsky Prospekt have been closed to traffic in preparation for Putin's cortege to come driving down them to the Kremlin. The Times' Tony Halpin noted on Twitter "a stream of black Audis and Mercedes carrying the power elite to the Kremlin" via the roads as well. The entrances and exits of dark blue line Arbatskaya and red line Kropotkinskaya metro stations have also been closed from 11 a.m. to noon, Interfax reported.

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