

Hopeless Cranes to Be Airlifted to Wintering Grounds

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A flock of endangered cranes that failed to fly to wintering grounds in Central Asia despite lessons from President Vladimir Putin will go by jet instead, Putin's spokesman said Thursday.

Five of the six Siberian cranes that briefly followed a motorized hang glider piloted by Putin last month — part of the "Flight of Hope" program, aimed at introducing the birds into the wild — got as far as a nature reserve in the Tyumen region, Dmitry Peskov said, Interfax reported.

One bird made it to Kazakhstan, about 500 kilometers farther south, where it got separated from a flock of common cranes it was flying with, and locals had to rescue it from wild dogs.

"Kazakhstan's forestry chief heard about the incident and intuitively grasped the identity of the crane in question," Peskov said.

Russian ornithologists were expected to fly that crane back to a wildlife preserve in the Ryazan region Thursday to reunite it with the other birds, which had been brought there.

All six will then be airlifted to wintering grounds on the Kazakh-Uzbek border.

Putin's flight, for which he wore a billowing white crane suit, drew mockery from his critics, who said the long-serving leader's periodic outdoor exploits, from tagging tigers to riding bare-chested on horseback, have more to do with PR than conservation.

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