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Kazakhstan Sends Putin's Crane Back to Russia

By The Moscow Times

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Kazakh authorities said Wednesday that they are sending one of the Siberian cranes that took to the skies with President Vladimir Putin in September back to a Russian nature reserve after the bird got stranded in the country's vast steppes.

"Until today, the bird was temporarily kept at the home of an inspector with the Akmola region's forestry and hunting commission," Kazakhstan's Agriculture Ministry said in a statement on its website.

The rare crane, which was reared by Russian ornithologists and ended up in Kazakhstan after unsuccessfully trying to migrate to warmer wintering grounds, was entrusted to the forestry official after locals saved it from a pack of wild dogs.

Kazakh officials said the crane will now be returned to the Oksky reserve, from where it was supposed to be introduced into the wild. It will join up with five other cranes who were

rescued from the Tyumen region in October after failing to follow their wild brothers south.

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

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