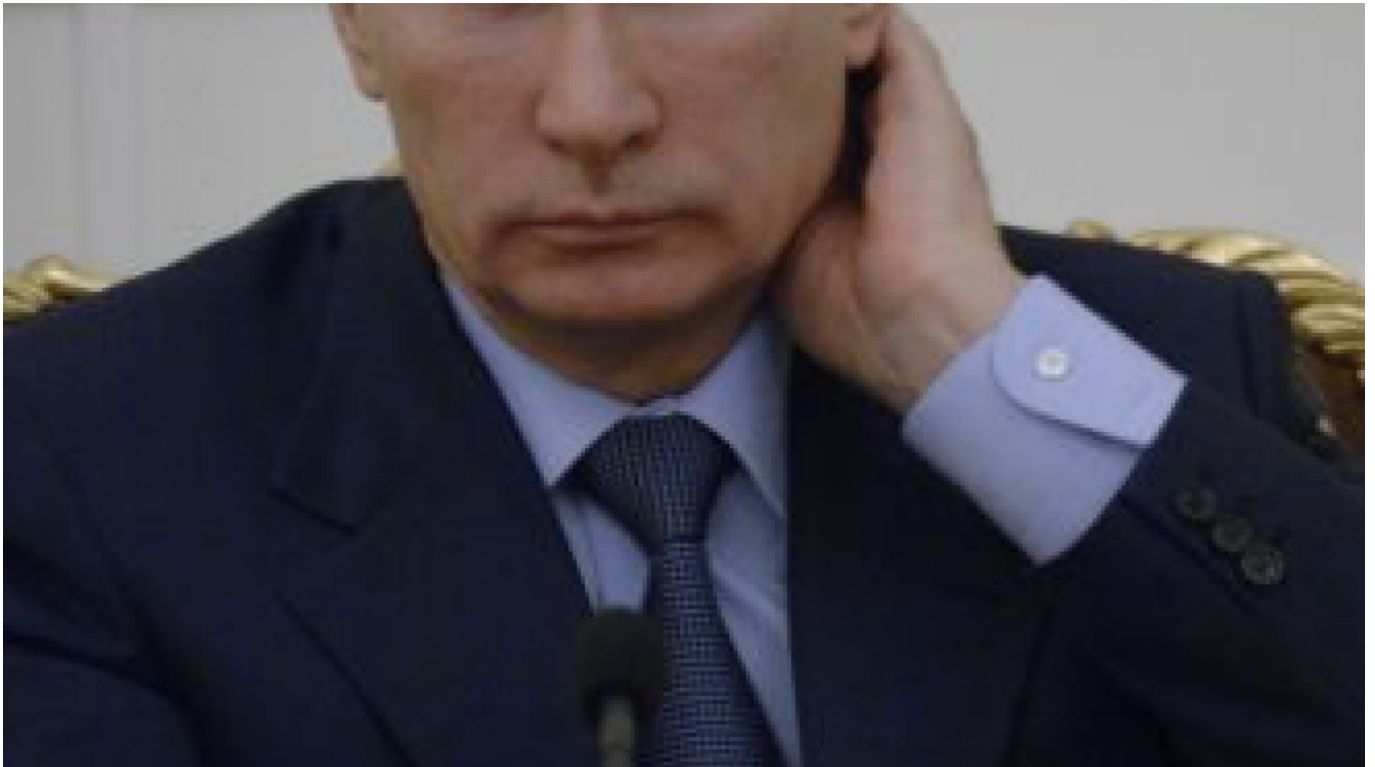


Putin to Travel After 2 Months at Home

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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Putin's spokesman explained in late October that the president's annual call-in show had been postponed until the summer so that participants' "ears and feet" won't freeze. **Sergei Porter**

President Vladimir Putin is visiting Turkey and Turkmenistan next week, signaling that he is fit for travel again after a two-month hiatus that raised speculation about his health.

Putin is expected to meet Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Abdullah Gül during a half-day working visit Dec. 3 in Istanbul, a Turkish diplomatic source confirmed Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity because an official announcement had not been made.

Two days later, Putin will attend the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the Turkmen capital, Ashgabat, Konstantin Zatulin, director of the influential CIS Institute and a former Duma deputy, told The Moscow Times.

Putin is not known to have traveled since returning from an Oct. 5 visit to Tajikistan. The Kremlin subsequently canceled all visits planned for October and November, citing

scheduling difficulties.

It also postponed Putin's annual TV call-in show until summer, citing climatic conditions. The annual presidential State of the Nation Address is also overdue.

In late October, Reuters reported that the real reason was a back ailment that required surgery. A week later, Vedomosti reported that the president was suffering from an old injury that came to the fore after he flew in a hang glider with endangered cranes in Siberia on Sept. 6.

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, denied the reports, saying the president had merely pulled a muscle while exercising. He also said Putin would spend as much time as possible at his out-of-town residence, Novo-Ogaryovo, to avoid disrupting traffic.

But speculation of Putin's failing health has been spiraling since, with some opposition activists even claiming that the president is terminally ill with cancer.

"Bolen" (sick) was the second-most-popular search word to accompany "Putin" on the popular Yandex search engine Monday.

Apart from Turkey and Turkmenistan, Putin is expected to attend a summit with European Union leaders in Brussels on Dec. 21 and visit India on Dec. 24, according to the monthly schedule [published](#) on state-run news agency RIA-Novosti's website.

Also on Monday, the Kremlin [announced](#) that Putin would give his annual presidential news conference on Dec. 20.

Putin gave large annual news conferences during his first two presidencies, but the practice was discontinued by his successor, Dmitry Medvedev, who gave only one during his four-year term. That came in May 2011.

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