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United Russia Seeks Internet 'Jedis' to Boost Its Image

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Condemned by a leading blogger as the "party of crooks and thieves," the ruling United Russia party is looking for Internet-savvy supporters to promote its brand in Moscow, the cradle of mass anti-Kremlin protests.

The Internet has been widely used by President Vladimir Putin's foes in recent years as a tool for exposing corruption among officials and organizing protests.

But United Russia, regularly satirized on the Internet, is fighting back with a bid for more positive online coverage before Moscow mayoral elections in which the incumbent Sergei Sobyanin, a close Putin ally, will seek a five-year term.

"We need the 'Jedis' of the social networks ... the idols of audiences in their thousands," United Russia's Moscow branch said in a note announcing the launch of the Summer Blogger School offering training to sympathizers.

(Reuters)

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