

Putin Offers a Ring to Patriots' Kraft

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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ST. PETERSBURG — President Vladimir Putin is calling a truce in the "War of the Ring" — sort of.

Accused of pocketing a diamond-encrusted Super Bowl ring that New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft showed him back in 2005, Putin came up with a peace offering, albeit barbed.

"You know, I remember neither Mr. Kraft nor a ring," Putin said when asked about the incident during an economic forum on Friday in St. Petersburg, the city where the ring saga started.

"I remember some souvenirs were handed out. But if it is so precious to Kraft and the team, I have a proposal," Putin said. He would ask a Russian jeweler to make "something really good, noticeable, so that it is clear that it is an expensive thing, with good metal and a stone."

The Russian ring could "be handed down from generation to generation of the team that Mr. Kraft represents," he said, and would be "the smartest, most partner-like solution to this

difficult international issue."

In a statement in 2005, Kraft said he had decided to give Putin the ring as a gesture of goodwill.

But the matter resurfaced earlier this month when the New York Post reported that Kraft had told an awards ceremony audience recently that he had intended only to show Putin the ring, but that the Russian leader had taken it and not given it back.

"I put my hand out and he put it in his pocket, and three KGB guys got around him and walked out," Kraft said of the ring he wore after the Patriots beat the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl in February 2005, according to the account published in the Post.

He said Putin had remarked that he could "kill someone" with the hefty ring.

About 70 Super Bowl rings are given to the winning team in the annual American football championship.

The New York Post reported that Kraft said he had wanted the ring back but that the White House, then under President George W. Bush, had told him it would be better for relations with Moscow if he treated it as a gift.

While the Kremlin has been at pains to parry the Post report — Putin's spokesman said last week that the ring at issue had clearly been meant as a gift — Kraft may actually be taking the incident less seriously.

The Patriots said in a statement on the National Football League website last week that the tale of Putin and the ring is one that Kraft likes to tell for laughs.

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