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Putin Gives Toy Car to Flood Victim's Son

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President Putin demonstrating a toy car to one of the flood victim's son.

President Vladimir Putin gave a remote-controlled toy car to the son of a dead serviceman during his airborne meeting with the bereaved family on New Year's Eve, a video clip posted Monday on the Kremlin's website shows.

Last Tuesday Putin traveled to Khabarovsk to mark the start of 2014 with families affected by last year's devastating floods in Russia's Far East and to deliver one of his two New Year's speeches.

On the way from Moscow to Khabarovsk, Putin had his plane touch down in Chita to take on board the family of late soldier Bair Banzaraktsayev, who drowned in the aftermath of the floods while trying to stop his truck from becoming submerged in water, RIA Novosti reported.

He had been driving a truck along a partially inundated highway linking the cities of Khabarovsk and Komsomolsk-on-Amur when the road gave way under the heavy vehicle. He is the only person known to have died as a result of the floods.

Banzaraktsayev was posthumously awarded a medal for bravery and his son Galsan, 6, was presented with a box wrapped in shiny blue paper. The toy car was inside.

"The boy was very happy and even played with the car on the president's plane" during the flight, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, Itar-Tass reported Sunday. "Probably, there was a violation of air safety rules, but apparently the plane has additional protection against radio interference," Peskov quipped.

Putin handed Banzaraktsayev's daughter Seseg a Russian passport, as she had recently turned 14 and was due one.

The president also offered the soldier's widow, Irina, some words of comfort and thanked the soldier's parents for bringing up a brave and responsible son.

Irina "already knows that we will do everything we can to help her bring up her children," Putin said, Regnum reported Monday.

The floods were the worst in Russia for 120 years, affecting many far eastern regions and forcing thousands of residents to evacuate their homes.

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