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No Plans to Rename Star Offending Putin

By The Moscow Times

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A certificate showing the adoption of the star named 'Putin-Huilo,' which translates from Ukrainian as'Putin is a d*ckhead.'

Pale Blue Dot, the organization through which a group of Ukrainian astronomers named a star "Putin-[expletive]!," has no plans to rescind the name after discovering its meaning in English, the group's founder told The Moscow Times by phone on Friday.

The star, officially designated as KIC 9696936, was adopted through the Pale Blue Dot project, which allows anyone to name a star for a minimum of $10. The proceeds support the research efforts of the White Dwarf Research Corporation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to space research and public education.

"Free speech is now written in the stars," project founder Travis Metcalfe said, pointing out this is not the first time that people have exchanged jabs through their star-naming service.

"We have no plans to censor any of these star adoptions. We appreciate the support for science," Metcalfe added.

The Ukrainian astronomers who named the star drew their inspiration from former Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Deshchytsia, who used the disparaging term to describe Russian President Vladimir Putin during a disorderly protest outside the Russian Embassy in Kiev in June.

Metcalfe said the group named the star some time ago, but only recently did the meaning of the name come to light.

"It says Putin is a [expletive], but in Ukrainian — so we didn't recognize what it actually said. I wasn't familiar with the term," Metcalfe said. The group only realized what it meant after the Ukrainian astronomers began to publicize their exploits online.

Although Pale Blue Dot keeps its own database, it is the International Astronomical Union that keeps the official record of star names.

"We are actually astronomers, so we know that people cannot name stars," Travis Metcalfe told The Moscow Times by phone on Friday, adding "there's lots of companies out there that do this."

The difference between Pale Blue Dot and the many star-naming services is that "we are the ones that are doing it for science," Metcalfe said, noting the proceeds from the project go toward astronomical research.

The "Putin [expletive]" slogan, popular among football fans in Ukraine, has became a cult phrase in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea. The slogan has been featured in music videos and printed on an array of T-shirts and accessories.

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