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Putin Sends Chief of Staff to Attend Auschwitz Ceremony

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Reports earlier this month claimed Russian president Vladimir Putin would snub the ceremony commemorating the Auschwitz death camp after failing to receive a formal invitation to the event.

The head of President Vladimir Putin's administration will represent Russia at events commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Soviet liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in Poland, a spokesman for the organizers said Tuesday.

Heads of state will gather at the site of the Nazi camp near Krakow in southern Poland on Jan. 27 to remember the estimated 1.5 million people, most of them Jews, who perished there during World War II.

But distrust between the West and Russia generated by the conflict in Ukraine has cast a pall over the plans and reports earlier this month said Putin was unlikely to take part in the commemoration.

"The Russian side have confirmed that the delegation participating in the anniversary events will be led by Sergei Ivanov," Bartosz Bartyzel, a spokesman for the museum organizing

the commemoration said.

Poland, which has sharply criticized Moscow over its role in the Ukraine crisis, did not send a full diplomatic invitation to Putin, wary of the domestic political consequences of inviting the Russian leader, sources have said.

Formal invitations to foreign delegations were sent not by the Polish government but by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and International Auschwitz Council, the joint organizers.

The presidents of Germany, France, Poland and Ukraine are among the statesmen expected to attend the commemoration.

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