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Pushkov Compares Obama to Bush Jr. Over Russian Economy Comment

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Alexei Pushkov

A prominent anti-Western lawmaker said Thursday that U.S. President Barack Obama must have confused Russia with Ukraine when he claimed the Russian economy was "in tatters."

"When Obama said Russia's economy has been torn to shreds, he mixed up countries. [In fact] it is the Ukrainian economy that has been torn to shreds. Bush also mixed up countries," Alexei Pushkov, who heads the State Duma's Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote Thursday on Twitter.

Obama's predecessor George W. Bush Jr. was slammed for his lack of general knowledge during his election campaign in 1999 when he confused Slovakia and Slovenia and referred to the people of Greece as "Grecians."

The trend continued while in office, when at an APEC summit in 2007 in Sydney he thanked "Austrian" Prime Minister John Howard for "the excellent organization of the OPEC summit," — mistakenly using the acronym for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting

Countries.

Speaking Tuesday during his annual State of the Union address, Obama praised the U.S. and its allies for standing up to Russian "aggression," adding that the fallout from the Ukraine crisis had left Russia "isolated" and its economy "in tatters" — an expression that was widely translated in the Russian media as "torn to shreds."

Western sanctions against Moscow combined with the falling price of oil have hit Russia hard, with the IMF saying Tuesday in its latest World Economic Outlook report that its economy will shrink by 3.5 percent this year.

Ukraine has also been badly affected by fighting in the country's east, struggling throughout 2014 to resolve a gas pricing dispute with Russia while trying to prop up its faltering currency.

In April last year, the IMF agreed on a $17 billion rescue package with Ukraine, of which it has so far paid out $4.6 billion in two tranches.

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