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Cossack Leader to Erect Putin Statue in St. Petersburg

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A group of St. Petersburg Cossacks are planning to immortalize President Vladimir Putin by erecting a statue in his honor, a news report said Monday.

Andrei Polyakov, a member of the Orthodox Cossack union Irbis, told the Ekho St. Petersburg radio station that the statue would be built on private land by May, a report on the station's website said Monday.

The likeness of Putin would be positioned so as to face a separate statue of Don Cossack Pyotr Krasnov, a former Tsarist officer who was executed by the Soviet authorities in 1947, the report said.

"President Putin has restored the Russian Empire. He has returned our lost territories, he has created a powerful army," Polyakov, a Cossack ataman leader, was cited as saying in the report.

Polyakov is not the first to raise the idea of erecting a monument to Putin, who grew up in St.

Petersburg.

In 2008 the Moscow City Duma monuments commission rejected a proposal to build a Putin statue in central Moscow, with one official saying it was an issue for "future generations."

Four years earlier, sculptor Zurab Tsereteli made a statue of Putin in a judo outfit, though it was coldly received by the Kremlin and was left to stand in the artist's personal gallery.

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