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Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson Offered Job by Russian Military Television

By The Moscow Times

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British television presenter Jeremy Clarkson leaves his home in London.

A television network owned by Russia's Defense Ministry is trying to hire former "Top Gear" presenter Jeremy Clarkson to host a Russian version of the popular BBC car show.

The BBC said this week it would ax Clarkson from "Top Gear" at the end of this month after the television star punched his producer in a spat over the food provided to the show's hosts.

The Defense Ministry's Zvezda television station, eyeing an opportunity to jump on Clarkson's huge following in Russia, on Thursday published a letter sent to the presenter this week inviting him to Moscow to discuss launching a Russian car show.

The letter, written in English, said: "The Russian Armed Forces Broadcasting Company ZVEZDA expresses deep honour to you and kindly asks for cooperation. We would like to invite you to be a presenter of motoring show on our TV Channel in Moscow."

A Clarkson spokesperson told the network that the presenter was considering the offer, the report said, adding that talks were planned in Moscow at the start of April.

Zvezda published an e-mailed response from Daniel Rix, who was identified as Clarkson's director. The e-mail said: “I can only imagine what an episode of Russian ["Top Gear"] would look like!”

“It could feature a Tsar in a reasonably priced car!” Rix added in a reference to a "Top Gear" segment in which celebrity stars test cheap cars on a racetrack. Zvezda didn't seem to get the joke, translating Rix's words into Russian as “[The program] could become a Tsar among shows about reasonable prices cars in Russia.”

"Top Gear" first aired in 1977, and since then the show has become one of the most popular series in the world, with a global audience of hundreds of millions. Clarkson is so popular that a million viewers signed a petition to the BBC asking for him to be spared the sack.

Clarkson has used the show to review several Soviet automobiles, and Zvezda is also impressed with his affinity for military equipment. "Top Gear" has been known to play with tanks, airplanes and other hardware, sometimes comparing their speeds to civilian automobiles.

However, Clarkson's opinion of Soviet and Russian cars isn't stellar. Zvezda wrote that he may change his mind after coming to Russia and learning more about the industry.

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