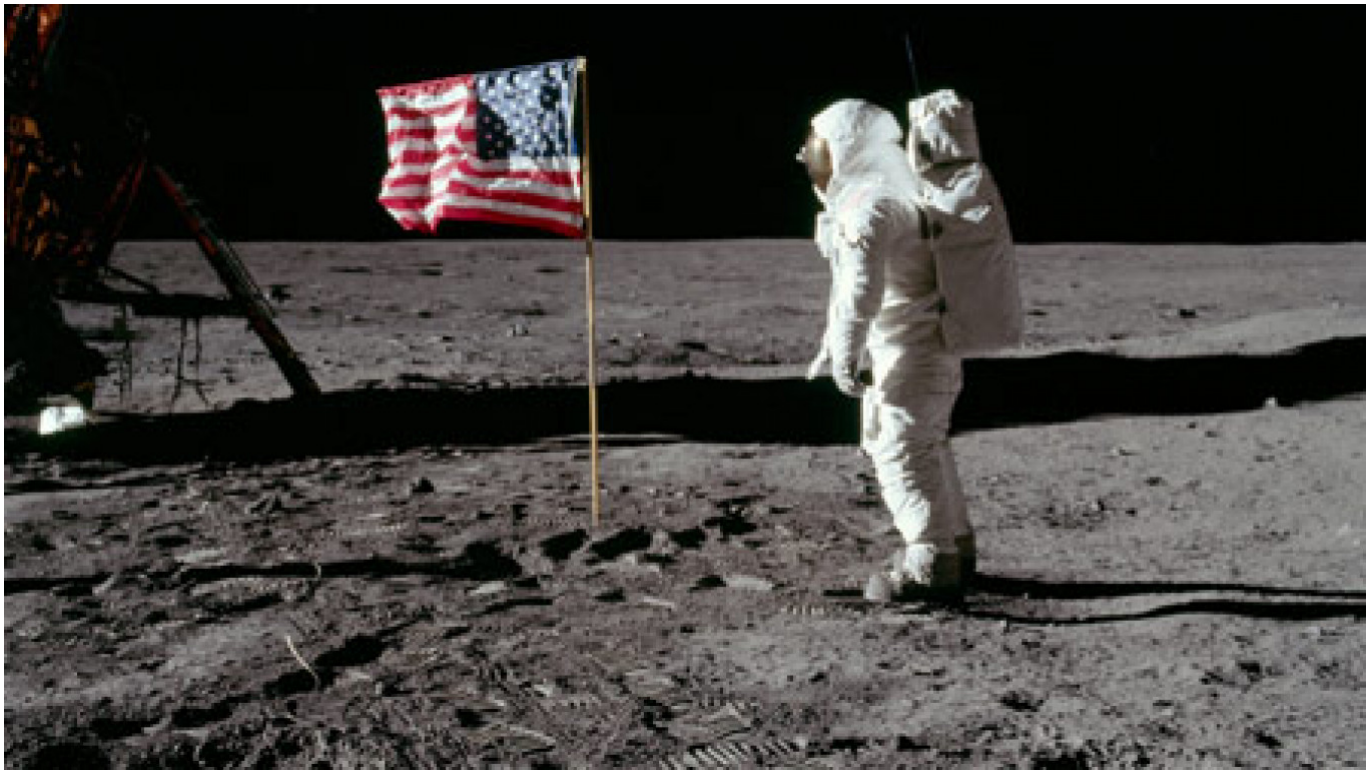
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Weekly Wrap: Foie Gras, Lizards and Astronauts

By Unfair Observer

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President Vladimir Putin promised this week to deploy 40 new intercontinental ballistic missiles by the year's end — just to be on the safe side, because the planet is full of enemies trying to ruin Russia's economy and take away its 2018 World Cup.

Levelheaded analysts will tell you that the saber rattling is just so everyone leaves Russia alone — like when a blowfish puffs up so it won't fit in a tiger shark's mouth.

But when the war breaks out, remember that you first read your warning here: You don't mess with Russia's World Cup.

Meanwhile, an extra 3 million Russians fell below the poverty line this year, statisticians were forced to admit.

One ICBM costs between $30 million and $50 million, so Putin could feed a crowd of millions with a single rocket.

But there are more vital things to spend taxpayer money on — and it's not just missiles, but also lawmakers, and possibly even sentient reptiles (if they are different from lawmakers).

Take the Money and Run

The Kremlin voiced plans to move the 2016 State Duma parliamentary elections up by three months — from December to September.

The official explanation is rubbish; the real deal is that early September is believed to a better time because everybody is on vacation and just doesn't care about elections.

The fun thing is, the move comes with an extra price tag of 700 million rubles ($13 million).

This is how much the 450 current lawmakers will be owed for not being able to sit out their whole term.

A deputy Duma speaker already said it's not a golden parachute, even though it looks like one.

But perhaps the sum could be raised. I say let's scrap those 40 new ICBMs, take all the money and give it to the lawmakers — to split evenly, fight to the death over it, set up a welfare fund, or just blow it all on foie gras and booze, the favorite treats of ultraconservative lawmaker Yelena Mizulina, according to recent photos of her shopping in an upscale Moscow supermarket.

Just take the money, leave and never, ever come back, especially to run in an election.

Ban the Internet

For now, the Duma is busy proving to the taxpayers that it is worth the money. To that end, it is about to erase the Internet.

A fast-tracked privacy bill will require search engines to stop displaying any pages containing information older than three years concerning any individual who has something to hide. You cannot hide a criminal conviction until it expires, but the rest should go once you ask for it.

Yandex and Google Russia are crying foul, while rights activists point out the law is uniquely suited to hide any dirty laundry of the same lawmakers who will pass it.

But let's expose a different kind of discrimination. Why stop at the Internet?

The information about your foie gras addictions, ideological spinelessness and past misdeeds will still be there in the newspapers, magazines, books and in public memory. They all need to be tweaked.

Remove any mention of Mizulina and her ilk from print, forbid any talk of them, ransack libraries and burn old newspaper files in the squares. (Throw in George Orwell's "1984" too, for good measure.)

And if they take the money and go, then we can finally forget about all of them.

The Moon Hoax

Lawmakers were not the only state servants busy as beavers this week protecting the public peace: Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin called for an investigation into the 1969 U.S. moon landing.

He claimed he does not question the actual landing.

He only wondered where the nearly 400 kilograms of lunar rock reportedly obtained during several such missions between 1969 and 1972 have been spirited away to, but of course, we all know better.

The Unfair Observer has repeatedly advocated the abolition of science in Russia, and it is nice to see Markin so far ahead of the curve. Of course the Americans did not land on the Moon, leave it to Russia to blow the whistle on them!

But there is a bigger theory we would like put forth or, rather, elaborate on: the long-known fact that the Earth is run by a shadow government of shape-shifting reptilians (commonly known as the Bilderberg Club).

It is an all-too-human mistake to think all reptilians are in accord. But actually, an internal rift between our lizard masters would explain so well the current split between Russia and the West.

In fact, it is the only rational explanation for this lunacy.

The lizard men are fighting, and us humans are suffering. Could the Investigative Committee please look into that?

Unfair Observer is the pen name of a Russian journalist that The Moscow Times has invited to observe the most brain-dead weekly developments in Russia.

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