

Putin Urges Equality, Respect in Independence Day Message to Obama

By [The Moscow Times](#)

July 05, 2015



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President Vladimir Putin called for dialogue based on equal treatment and mutual respect with the United States on Saturday in a congratulatory message to President Barack Obama marking U.S. Independence Day.

Putin said U.S.-Russian relations remained important for solving global crises. The two countries have disagreements over the conflict in Ukraine, defense matters and democracy.

"In his message of congratulations, the Russian President noted that, despite the differences between the two countries, Russian-American relations remain the most important factor of international stability and security," the Kremlin said in a statement.

Putin expressed confidence that Russia and the United States could find solutions to the most complicated international issues and meet global threats and challenges together if they based their relationship on the principles of equality and respect for each other's interests, the Kremlin added.

The statement did not provide further details and did not mention Western sanctions imposed over Russia's alleged role in the Ukraine crisis and Moscow's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

The wording of the message was similar to last year's congratulatory message to Obama.

Meanwhile, U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton had harsh words for Putin in her own address Saturday, saying that the United States needs to be "much smarter" in dealing with the Russian president.

She said Putin's moves to expand Russia's boundaries, such as the annexation of Crimea last year, posed a challenge for the United States but she touted her experience as America's chief diplomat.

She noted that because of NATO members' agreement to protect fellow members, had Ukraine been a member of NATO when Crimea was annexed, "that would have caused us to have to respond."

She added on Putin: "We have to be much smarter in how we deal with Putin and how we deal with his ambitions. ... I've dealt with him. I know him. He's not an easy man. ... But I don't think there is any substitute other than constant engagement."

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