

# Russian Comedians Claim Putin's Hoax Call to Elton John

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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British singer Elton John (L) and Russian comedian Vladimir Krasnov

A pair of Russian comedians say they impersonated Russian President Vladimir Putin in a prank phone call to British singer Elton John, Russian media reported Wednesday.

Vladimir Krasnov and Alexei Stolyarov, known in Russia for targeting celebrities and politicians with their audacious stunts, say they called the British singer a day after he told journalists he would like to meet Putin to discuss gay rights.

"Yes, it was us," Krasnov was quoted as saying by Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper. "I was 'Vladimir Putin'."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied Tuesday that Putin had made the call and suggested it could have been a prank after Elton John posted a photo of the Russian president on Instagram thanking him for the conversation.

"Thank-you to President Vladimir Putin for reaching out and speaking via telephone with me today. I look forward to meeting with you face-to-face to discuss LGBT equality in Russia," the gay singer and campaigner wrote on Instagram.

Russia has been criticized by the West and human rights activists for its treatment of gay people and the "Rocket Man" singer has campaigned publicly against a 2013 law banning the dissemination of "gay propaganda" among young people.

Through a Russian interpreter, John is heard on the 11-minute call discussing a visit to Moscow with a man he believed was Putin.

"Tell him I am extremely honored that he is calling me. It is a great privilege to be able to speak to one of the most influential people in the whole world. It's amazing," John says on the call, the tape of which was released to Reuters.

John agreed to travel to Moscow for a Gay Pride event, and said he hoped to have a "wonderful discussion" with Putin.

He concluded the call saying, "Tell him he has made my day, OK ... it's a very wonderful moment in my life."

John's representatives did not immediately return calls for comment on Wednesday after it was revealed that he had been the target of a prank.

Putin's spokesman Peskov advised the comedians to issue an apology to the singer.

"I would actually advise [them] to apologize to Elton John, he is a well respected and beloved singer. It probably wasn't very nice to trick him like that," he was cited by RIA Novosti state-run news agency as saying Wednesday.

Peskov added that the Russian president would very likely meet with John if there was a request for such a meeting. "If there were a proposal or a request from Elton John, I have no doubt that the president would be ready to meet with him and answer his questions," he said.

*Material from The Moscow Times has been included in this report.*

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