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Putin-Watch Is Over Before It Takes Off

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Kremlin Press Service

President Vladimir Putin made a timely public appearance on Wednesday, putting an end to a week-long media speculation on his whereabouts.

The Russian president met with ministers and governors at his residence in the Kaliningrad region on Wednesday morning, the opposition-leaning Dozhd television channel reports. The broadcaster earlier reported Putin had not been seen in public since Aug. 9.

His last public appearances included a meeting with the leader of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia, Raul Khadzhimba, a martial arts tournament in Sochi and a meet-and-greet in Izhevsk.

Since then, journalists had not seen the Russian president, even though the Kremlin's website continued to publish daily updates of his activities, Dozhd said.

In June, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the president would not be able to go on a summer break due to his "intense schedule." However, Dozhd reported the president might

have taken an unannounced holiday and would only reappear on Wednesday.

Speculating on the reasons for Putin's disappearances is a recurring ritual for Russian media and Russia-watchers.

When in 2015 Putin disappeared for 11 days an Austrian newspaper reported he was suffering from back problems and that a Viennese orthopedic expert had traveled to Moscow to treat him. Other less likely explanations for his absence involved plastic surgery, the birth of a baby and even death.

Related article: Now That Putin Is Back, What Was He Up To in Those 11 Days?

Upon reappearing, Putin did not offer a reason for his absence, saying only life "would be boring without gossip."

Last year, the president also dropped off the map for more than a week in early July.

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