

Ex-FIFA President Meets Putin at World Cup

By [Reuters](#)

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Grigory Dukor / Reuters

Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin on Wednesday evening while in Russia to attend the World Cup, Blatter told Reuters on Thursday.

The Kremlin confirmed the meeting, but said it was a private matter and declined to provide details.

FIFA's Ethics Committee banned Blatter, who led FIFA for 17 years, from "all football activities" in 2015 after finding him guilty of unethical conduct related to a global corruption scandal which rocked the organization.

His appearance at the World Cup in Russia is therefore potentially embarrassing for FIFA and its new head, Gianni Infantino, who has promised to draw a line under FIFA's corruption problems and clean up the organization.

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Blatter, who has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing, said on Thursday he had been invited to the World Cup by Russia, which he said had organized his trip and provided him with tickets and a fan ID.

"I met President Putin yesterday evening. He invited me to his apartment in the Kremlin. It's not the first time I'm there," the 82-year-old said.

'Don't Be Embarrassed'

Blatter, who was speaking at a hotel in central Moscow, said he and Putin, who have known each other for a long time, had chatted about the World Cup and that Putin had spoken of the pleasure he took in hosting the tournament.

Blatter, who is Swiss, said he hoped that the FIFA ban on him taking part in footballing activities would be lifted by the end of this year.

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On Wednesday, he said that the tournament in Russia felt like "my World Cup," and on Thursday he said he would like to say "well done" to Infantino, his FIFA successor, for the World Cup so far, but added that FIFA should not be embarrassed by his presence there.

"There should be no reason that the new administration of FIFA should be against a former president coming to a World Cup. They should say 'yes, come in' ...and then everyone would be happy."

Blatter, who attended a game between Portugal and Morocco on Wednesday, said he would attend a match between Brazil and Costa Rica later this week before flying out of St. Petersburg at the end of the week.

FIFA has said that the fact that Blatter is attending matches does not constitute a direct breach of his ban.

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