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Russian Bank Apologizes After CEO Calls UK's Boris Johnson a 'Jerk'

By Reuters

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Russian state bank VTB apologized for its CEO Andrey Kostin who made what it called an "emotional comment" on Monday when he described former British foreign minister Boris Johnson as a "jerk."

Standing next to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the country's prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations university, Kostin said Russia was lucky to have such a minister, while criticizing his foreign counterparts.

"Look at, excuse me, the jerks in the West, say at Johnson and others," Kostin said, to applause.

The poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury in March deepened a crisis in relations between Moscow and London during Johnson's tenure as foreign minister. Moscow has denied any wrongdoing.

Johnson resigned as foreign secretary in July over the handling of Britain's divorce from the European Union.

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Around five hours after Kostin's remarks, the press office of VTB, targeted by Western sanctions in 2014 over Russia's role in the Ukrainian crisis, said: "Mr. Andrey Kostin sincerely apologises to Mr Boris Johnson."

"Mr. Boris Johnson's tenure as a Minister of Foreign Affairs fell during a period of significant deterioration of an already quite troubled Russo-British relations," VTB's press office said in a statement in English.

"Mr. Kostin's emotional comment made at the MGIMO University was caused by a deep disappointment regarding the crisis in the relations between our countries."

Kostin, speaking at MGIMO's annual academic year opening ceremony, said he had lived for quite a while in Britain and many English people "are in fact nice and smart people."

Kostin himself was included on a U.S. list of sanctions against Russian businessmen, companies and government officials in April in one of Washington's most aggressive moves to punish Moscow for a range of activities, including alleged meddling in the 2016 U.S. election. Russia denies any involvement.

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