The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

RT Trolls Trump With Post-Election Job Offer

September 23, 2020



At one point in the ad, the deepfake Trump admires the “great, great” Kremlin wall. **Screenshot RT**

The Kremlin-funded RT broadcaster leaned into its reputation as a U.S. election bogeyman with an ad offering President Donald Trump a job as “special host” if he loses the 2020 race.

RT used deepfake technology to transport Trump 44 days into the future, where he takes up Russian President Vladimir Putin’s offer to become RT’s “special host” after losing the vote on Nov. 3. The tongue-in-cheek spot superimposes Trump’s face and voice onto an actor’s body to show him adapting to his new job in Moscow.

Embed:

In the ad, the deepfake Trump struggles to read a teleprompter that’s going too fast, mangles his co-host’s name and tells the RT cafeteria's cashier that “Mexico will pay for” his food. At one point, the deepfake Trump admires the “great, great” Kremlin wall.

“Mr. Trump, if you won’t make it, consider this a formal offer,” RT’s two-minute spot says in the end credits.

“Note: this is parody, using #deepfake technology (but the job is there, Donald),” RT tweeted in a promotion of the ad and its coverage of the U.S. election.

The ad’s Russian-language version on YouTube makes no mention of the deepfake technology. Additionally, the closing shots feature deepfake Trump attempting to sing Soviet rock legend Viktor Tsoi’s protest anthem “I Want Changes” while strumming a guitar next to his mural.

RT registered as a foreign agent in the U.S. following the country’s 2016 presidential election. A U.S. intelligence report described RT and the Sputnik news agency as arms of “Russia’s state-run propaganda machine” involved in election interference, including hacking and a social media influence campaign.

Ahead of the 2016 election, news reports had suggested that Trump would leverage his media savvy to launch his own media empire if he lost to Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

The Russian government’s “socially oriented” draft budget approved last week reduces spending in key sectors but keeps support for state media steady at 102.8 billion rubles ($1.3 billion) next year. RT is projected to receive more than one-quarter, or $355.5 million, of this funding.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/09/23/rt-trolls-trump-with-post-election-job-offer-a71526