The Moscow Times
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Putin Still Won't Congratulate Biden Despite Start of Formal Transition

November 24, 2020



The Kremlin said Putin won't congratulate Biden before the election results are officially announced. **Kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin will not congratulate U.S. President-elect Joe Biden despite news that the Trump administration has approved the formal presidential transition process, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Trump eased some lingering post-election uncertainty by tweeting late Monday that the agency that works with incoming administrations would begin work to assist Biden's team. While the president tweeted that it was time for the General Services Administration to "do what needs to be done," he remained steadfast in his claim that he won the election and would carry on with legal challenges to the result.

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“No, that’s not enough,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked whether Trump’s tweet was reason for Putin to congratulate Biden.

“You know that reviews and recounts in some states are still continuing, without which the results of the election cannot be officially announced,” Interfax quoted Peskov as saying.

Putin’s press secretary added that “nothing has changed” since his initial comments two weeks ago that Putin will not congratulate Biden until legal challenges to the election are resolved.

Sergei Ryabkov, Russia’s deputy foreign minister, injected further pessimism into Moscow’s strained ties with the United States after Biden, who announced a foreign policy and national security team comprised of veteran officials, assumes the presidency next year.

“Whoever ends up in the White House after Jan. 20, 2021, I see no reason to hope for a dynamic improvement in Russian-American relations,” the state-run TASS news agency quoted Ryabkov as saying earlier Tuesday.

A total of 16 states have certified the results from the Nov. 3 election, with Michigan becoming the latest hotly contested state to give its electoral votes to Biden on Monday.

All challenges to the results must be resolved by Dec. 8 and all 50 states must certify the results before the Electoral College meets on Dec. 14.

AFP contributed reporting.

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