

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

March 22, 2021



Putin was filmed piloting an all-terrain vehicle through thick woodland in Siberia during a weekend holiday. [Kremlin.ru](https://kremlin.ru)

Weekend break

Russian President Vladimir Putin, during a holiday in Siberia with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, piloted an all-terrain vehicle through thick woodland and traversed a swaying rope bridge, Kremlin footage [showed](#).

The PR display comes one month after Putin jailed his loudest critic Alexei Navalny in one of Russia's most infamous penal colonies, a move the opposition figure's allies and Western countries said was a pretext to silence dissent.

Emergency consultations

Russia's ambassador to the United States [landed](#) in Moscow on Sunday after being recalled for emergency consultations over the worst crisis in relations with Washington in years.

Before takeoff in New York, Anatoly Antonov told agencies he would stay in Moscow "as long as necessary" and that several meetings were scheduled.

The move comes after U.S. President Joe Biden on television called the Russian leader a "killer" spurring a terse quip from Putin who responded that "it takes one to know one." Moscow, which rarely returns ambassadors, last summoned its envoy in the U.S. in 1998 over a Western bombing campaign in Iraq.

Pessimistic outlook

Russia's ambassador to Britain said Sunday that diplomatic ties between the two countries were "[nearly dead](#)," after a U.K. strategic review this week branded Moscow an "acute direct threat."

Andrei Kelin also criticized Britain's decision to bolster its nuclear stockpile, arguing the reversal of decades of policy was a violation of various international agreements.

Back to school

Russia has allowed university students from 25 countries deemed "safe," including Switzerland, Greece, Japan and South Korea, to [return](#) to their studies.

The returning students will need to notify their universities by email 10 days ahead of arrival and submit two coronavirus tests 72 hours before and after landing in Russia.

Grease the wheels

The sitting governor of the Penza region some 550 kilometers southeast of Moscow has been [arrested](#) on suspicion of accepting 31 million rubles (\$417,000) in bribes to lobby the interests of a pharmaceutical company.

Governor Ivan Belozertsev, a loyal Putin ally, was detained with the Biotech pharmaceutical firm's founder, Boris Spiegel, and other suspected accomplices in early Sunday raids, according to media reports.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/03/22/news-from-russia-what-you-missed-over-the-weekend-104-a73312>