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Kanye West Planning Russia Trip, Putin Meeting – Billboard

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Ye has made several references to the Russian president in recent years. **Angela Weiss / AFP**

Rapper Kanye West plans to visit Russia to pursue new musical and business ventures and seek an audience with President Vladimir Putin later this year, his associate told Billboard Tuesday in comments that his representative disputed.

The American entrepreneur and artist will perform his first-ever shows and discuss business deals with a Kremlin-linked billionaire during the visit sometime this spring or summer, according to West's strategic adviser Ameer Sudan.

"He will be spending a lot of time there," Billboard quoted Sudan as saying, who added that Russia is going to become "a second home" for him.

Sudan is helping coordinate the arrangements with attorney Scott Balber, who has served as legal counsel for Russian-Azerbaijani real estate developer Aras Agalarov and his pop star son Emin Agalarov.

The Agalarovs were embroiled in controversy for allegedly helping arrange the infamous June 2016 Trump Tower meeting where ex-U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign sought incriminating information about his Democratic Party rival Hillary Clinton.

Aras Agalarov, a close Putin ally, had served as a liaison between Putin and Trump to bring Trump's Miss Universe pageant to Moscow in 2013. The Agalarovs were also in talks to build a Trump Tower in Moscow, a project that never materialized.

According to Sudan's account to Billboard, West is working on new business deals with the Agalarovs that would increase his net worth to more than $10 billion.

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West, who in 2021 changed his legal name to Ye, is reported to have amassed a $6.6 billion fortune thanks to lucrative fashion brand deals.

"This is Ye, Ye is going to get there regardless. What are they going to say? He's going to be a special guest of the Agalarovs," Billboard quoted Sudan as saying.

Ye's PR representative Pierre Rougier dismissed Sudan's comments as "entirely fabricated" in comments to Rolling Stone, while Emin Agalarov's representative Rob Goldstone told the magazine he could "confirm the talks are going on."

The Kremlin on Wednesday said it had nothing to do with organizing Ye's trip to Russia.

Ye has made several references to the Russian president in recent years.

In 2020, the outspoken artist and failed U.S. presidential candidate tweeted a photo of Putin wrestling a judo sparring partner to the ground. Two months ago, he turned heads again by proclaiming himself a "young Putin" in an interview.

"I am Putin. I am young Putin. ... I realized that I was Vladimir when I realized that culture is an oil, culture is an energy. And I am the king of culture for the past 20 and the next 2,000 years," Ye said.

The Kremlin has not yet commented on Billboard's report on Ye's plans to meet Putin.

"Kanye knows what's going on more than the average human being, he's well aware of things," Sudan was quoted as saying. "And it's nothing against the United States or to cause conflicts, but Ye is Ye — he can't be controlled."

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