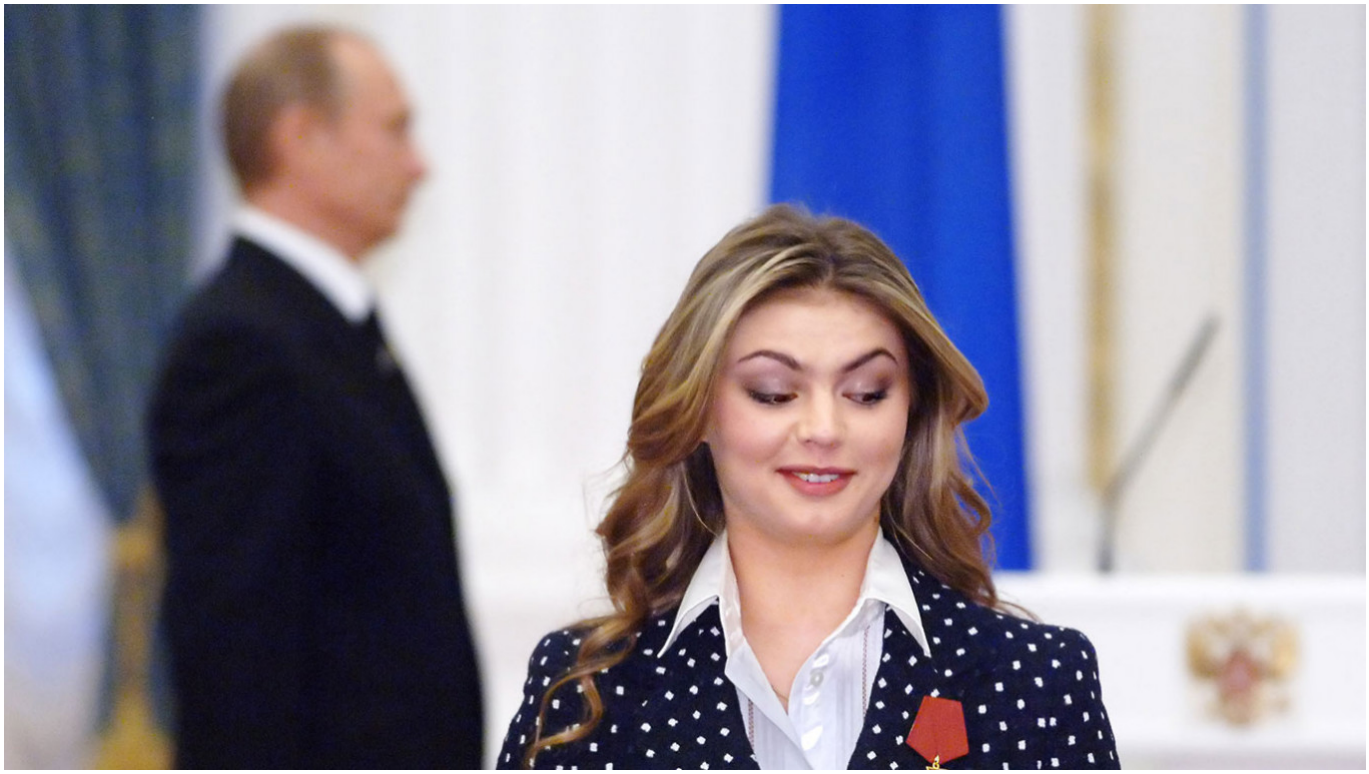
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U.S. Holds Sanctions on Rumored Putin 'Mistress' Kabaeva – WSJ

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President Vladimir Putin's rumored "mistress", former Olympic gymnast Alina Kabaeva. **Grigory Sysoyev / TASS**

The United States halted planned sanctions against President Vladimir Putin's rumored "mistress," former Olympic gymnast Alina Kabaeva, at the last minute, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday.

Unnamed U.S. officials told the newspaper that a classified intelligence report made while investigating alleged Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections singled out Kabaeva as a beneficiary of Putin's personal wealth. The U.S. government also believes that she is mother to at least three of Putin's children.

But the U.S. National Security Council reportedly made an 11th hour decision to remove Kabaeva from the country's latest sanctions package, designed to put pressure on the Kremlin following the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

They believed that imposing sanctions on Kabaeva would be deemed a personal blow to Putin,

hampering efforts to negotiate peace, the officials told WSJ.

“We have prepared sanctions on a number of people who haven’t yet been sanctioned, and we continue to think about when to impose those sanctions for maximum impact,” a U.S. official told the newspaper.

The Kremlin has long denied any relationship between Putin and Kabaeva, while news articles on their rumored engagement have been quickly punished by Russian censors.

Swiss, U.S. and European officials told the Wall Street Journal that Kabaeva traveled to Switzerland to give birth to Putin’s child in 2015. In 2019, she reportedly gave birth to twins in Moscow.

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Kabaeva heads a pro-Kremlin media holding, The National Media Group, which removed her name from its website shortly before another round of Western sanctions in early April. Those sanctions targeted two of Putin’s adult daughters with his former wife, Lyudmila Shkrebneva.

Kabaeva, 39, made a rare public appearance on Saturday to film a gymnastics exhibition scheduled to be broadcast as part of Russia’s Victory Day commemorations in May.

“Every family has a war-related story, and we must pass these stories to future generations,” Kabaeva said at the festival — named “Alina” festival in her honor.

Speaking of international backlash to Russia’s war in Ukraine — including Russian gymnasts, judges and coaches being banned from international competition — Kabaeva said: “We will only win from this.”

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