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Putin Accepts Invites to Visit Thailand, Vietnam

By AFP

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President Vladimir Putin with Thailand Prime Minister Seththa Thavisin. **Grigory Sysoyev, RIA Novosti / kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accepted invitations to visit Thailand and Vietnam, according to government statements from the two Southeast Asian nations.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has thrown Putin into international isolation, leaving him with few allies.

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for Putin over the alleged deportations of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia.

Thailand — which is not a state party to the ICC Rome Statute — opted to maintain cooperation with Russia.

Vietnam has maintained a strong relationship with Russia since the days of the Soviet Union.

President Vo Van Thuong invited Putin to visit Vietnam "soon," and Putin "happily" accepted the invitation, according to a Tuesday statement on the government's website.

Meanwhile, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin invited Putin for an official visit next year, he said in Beijing on Wednesday.

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Both Srettha and Thuong met Putin on the sidelines of China's Belt and Road Initiative forum.

"I invited him to visit Thailand next year," Srettha said.

"President Putin likes Phuket, I understand he travels often," he said, referring to the Thai resort island.

According to a Thai government statement, Putin has accepted the invitation, but a date has yet to be set.

During the meeting with Srettha, Putin lamented a decline in bilateral trade due to a "turbulent international situation," according to the TASS Russian news agency.

More than 1 million Russians visited tourism-dependent Thailand this year.

Thailand recently made changes to its visa arrangements to allow Russians to visit the kingdom for up to three months — an increase from 30 days.

Thailand joined China and India in abstaining at a UN General Assembly vote last year to condemn Russia's annexation of parts of Ukraine.

Vietnam's government website said Thuong and Putin discussed promoting economic and trade cooperation.

Russia is a top arms supplier to Vietnam.

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