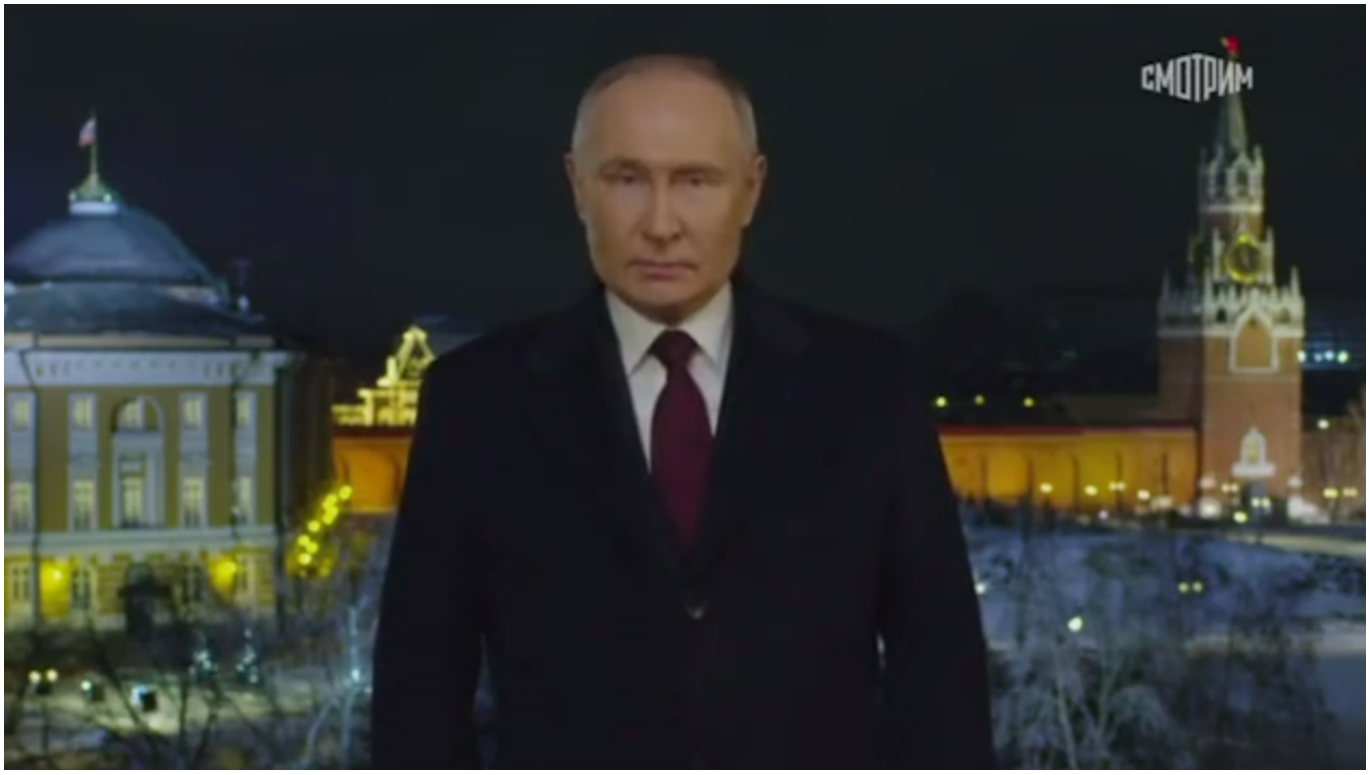
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Praises Army in Scaled-Back New Year's Eve Address

By AFP

December 31, 2023



Vladimir Putin delivers his New Year's Eve address on Sunday. **screen grab**

President Vladimir Putin praised the Russian army in his New Year's Eve address Sunday, calling for "unity" in a subdued speech that did not explicitly mention the war in Ukraine.

In stark contrast to last year's address, when the Russian leader was flanked by soldiers in uniform, Putin stood in front of the traditional backdrop of the Kremlin and declared that 2024 would be the "year of the family."

"We have repeatedly proven that we can solve the most difficult problems and will never back down because there is no force that can separate us," Putin said in the address, aired on state TV as regions in Russia's Far East greeted the New Year several hours ahead of Moscow.

Embed:

> новогоднее обращение 2022 vs. 2023. воистину слово года – нормализация pic.twitter.com/KojnsSYD2I
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> — Farida Rustamova (@faridaily_) December 31, 2023

Putin made no mention of the attack against the city of Belgorod on Saturday, in which officials said Ukrainian shelling killed at least 24 people and injured dozens more, but he did commend Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine during the holiday.

"To all those who are serving on the front line in the fight for truth and justice," Putin said, "you are our heroes. Our hearts are with you. We are proud of you, we admire your courage."

"We are united in our thoughts, in toil and in battle," he continued, adding that Russians understood their country was passing through what he called a significant "historical stage."

"We will ensure the confident development of the Fatherland, the well-being of our citizens, and we will become even stronger," Putin said toward the end of his address.

The televised New Year's Eve speech, which continues a tradition started by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, is a key part of holiday celebrations in Russia and is watched by millions.

The address is aired just before midnight in each of Russia's 11 timezones and is usually a summary of events from the past year, as well as wishes for the year ahead.

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