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Kremlin Says Trump Sent Putin Covid Tests as Part of International Cooperation

By AFP

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The Kremlin on Thursday confirmed claims that then-U.S. President Donald Trump sent Russian President Vladimir Putin Covid tests but said it was part of an international exchange at the start of the pandemic.

U.S. journalist Bob Woodward wrote in a book, "War," published Tuesday, that Trump secretly sent Covid test kits to Putin despite a U.S. shortage during the pandemic, and that Trump spoke multiple times with the Russian leader after leaving office.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that "the first tests worked badly and at first there was not enough equipment... all countries tried to somehow exchange between themselves. We sent a supply of ventilator units to the U.S., they sent these tests to us."

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Peskov said that this occurred "when the pandemic was starting," saying of the tests that "at the time, these were rare items."

With the coronavirus raging in 2020, Trump sent a batch of coveted tests to his counterpart in Moscow. Putin accepted the supplies but sought to avoid political fallout for Trump, urging he not reveal the dispatch of medical equipment, the book says.

According to Woodward, Putin told Trump: "I don't want you to tell anybody because people will get mad at you, not me."

Woodward also cited an unnamed Trump aide who indicated that Trump and Putin may have spoken up to seven times since 2021 — despite the U.S. effort to help Ukraine resist Russia's full-scale assault.

The Kremlin spokesman denied this, however.

"But as for the calls, that's not true, it didn't happen."

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