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South Africa's Ramaphosa Arrives in Russia for BRICS Summit

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Kirill Zykov / brics-russia2024.ru

South African President Cyril Rampahosa arrived in the Russian city of Kazan on Tuesday to attend the annual BRICS summit as Moscow seeks to project the economic bloc as a geopolitical counterweight to the West.

Russian media outlets shared videos of Ramaphosa being greeted by Rustam Minnikhanov, who heads the republic of Tatarstan where Kazan is located.

Ramaphosa will first meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and several other leaders attending the three-day summit, according to the South African presidency. He will then deliver a statement during a plenary session on Wednesday, as well as a second statement during the "BRICS Summit Outreach/BRICS Plus" session on Thursday.

Embed:

South Africa, which has not condemned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, faced a diplomatic dilemma last year in hosting Putin, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over the alleged deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.

Though a member of the ICC with obligations to carry out its mandate, South Africa avoided angering both Moscow and its major Western economic partners by agreeing that Putin would not attend the 2023 BRICS summit. Ramaphosa disclosed in court papers at the time that Russia had warned that arresting Putin "would be a declaration of war."

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South Africa has strong economic and trade relations with the United States and Europe. While trade with Russia is much smaller, South Africa has ties with Moscow dating back decades, to when the Kremlin supported the ruling African National Congress party in its struggle against apartheid.

BRICS takes its name from the first letters of the five members who joined between 2009 and 2010. This year, the group expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The Kremlin said the leaders of 24 countries would attend the BRICS summit in Kazan, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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