

Russia's Elites, Family and Friends Travel Abroad on Diplomatic Passports – The Insider

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Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill. **Ismael Francisco / AP / TASS**

Russia's political and business elites, as well as their friends and family, have for years been able to travel abroad using diplomatic passports, the investigative news outlet [The Insider reported](#) Thursday, citing documents it obtained.

Russian law does not explicitly allow non-diplomats to obtain diplomatic passports, but they may still be [issued](#) to anyone "as decided by the President of Russia," creating an exploitable loophole.

"It's all at the discretion of the state, and the Foreign Ministry can issue diplomatic passports on requests to virtually anyone," ex-diplomat [Boris Bondarev](#) told The Insider. "If the Presidential Administration or Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] ask you to issue one to some friend of his, then of course they will."

Western-sanctioned oligarchs Oleg Deripaska, Alisher Usmanov and Ukrainian-sanctioned Igor Yusufov are all recipients of Russian diplomatic passports, according to The Insider.

Previous reporting indicated that Deripaska had used his diplomatic passport to [enter](#) the United States a “handful of times.” The Insider said Deripaska used a diplomatic passport to travel to India last year.

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Rosneft state oil giant CEO Igor Sechin is another holder of a Russian diplomatic passport. Since at least 2013, The Insider reports Sechin used his diplomatic passport to visit several EU countries, as well as the Middle East.

The Insider said Putin aide and ex-minister Andrei Fursenko used his diplomatic passport to visit France, Germany, Iran and Italy. Ex-prime minister [Viktor Zubkov](#) used his to visit Azerbaijan aboard a business jet operated by the Gazprom gas giant, where he is chairman of the board.

Federal Security Service (FSB) chief Alexander Bortnikov, as well as FSB generals Sergei Beseda, Sergei Korolev and Alexei Sedov, reportedly used theirs to visit France and Switzerland before Russia invaded Ukraine.

Among the children of officials to receive diplomatic passports, The Insider listed Ksenia Shoigu, the daughter of former defense minister and current secretary of Russia’s Security Council Sergei Shoigu; Ilya Medvedev, the son of ex-president and Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev; and Alexander Mishustin, the son of Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin.

Russia’s Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Kirill had also used his diplomatic passport to “regularly” visit Germany, Austria and Finland before mutual flight bans over the invasion of Ukraine were introduced.

Diplomatic passport holders must formally return the document into storage after coming back from trips abroad, but “this rule doesn’t apply to everyone,” The Insider quoted an anonymous former government official as saying.

“They always looked elsewhere when VIPs traveled with a diplomatic passport to places like Cote d’Azur,” the source added.

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