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Putin Says Russia Should 'Strangle' Foreign Tech Companies

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Vladimir Putin. **Sergei Savostyanov / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin said late Monday that Western tech companies still operating in Russia but acting against the country's interests should be "strangled," as authorities seek to replace foreign software and services with domestic alternatives.

"We need to strangle them... I say this without hesitation," Putin told business leaders at a Kremlin meeting, responding to complaints from Iva Technologies CEO Stanislav Iodkovsky, who said local firms were "losing billions" because companies like Zoom and Microsoft had not fully withdrawn from the Russian market.

"We must respond in kind, mirror their actions," the Kremlin leader added. Asked about Russian consumers who still rely on foreign software and services, Putin said his proposal would help rid them of "bad habits."

Hundreds of Western companies have left Russia or scaled back their operations in the country since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In response, the Kremlin has

imposed steep exit costs on remaining firms.

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"We haven't kicked anyone out... we provided the most favorable conditions for them to work in our market, and they are trying to strangle us," Putin said at the Kremlin meeting.

But, he added, Russia will not "roll out the red carpet" for companies like McDonald's, which sold its Russian business in 2022. The U.S. fast food chain was quickly replaced by the Vkusno i tochka, a virtual rebranding of McDonald's.

Amid U.S. President Donald Trump's efforts to reset relations with Moscow and mediate an end to the war in Ukraine, rumors have emerged that some Western firms are looking to re-enter the Russian market. Yet, Putin has warned that any return would be met with strict protectionist conditions.

At the same time, business leaders and economic officials in Russia say that they have so far not seen any interest among foreign companies to restart their businesses in the country. Western companies, meanwhile, say they continue to see risks to operating in Russia.

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