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Putin Spends Subdued 73rd Birthday at Work

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Kremlin Press Service

President Vladimir Putin is spending his 73rd birthday working and taking calls with foreign leaders, the Kremlin said Tuesday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the president plans to meet with members of the Russian Security Council, as the full-scale invasion of Ukraine rages on for a fourth year.

Putin's birthdays have been relatively low-key since the start of the war in 2022. Before the invasion, he often marked the occasion with foreign trips, hikes in Siberia or friendly hockey games.

While Peskov said the president may have "some personal plans," he added that a number of international phone calls were scheduled throughout the day.

According to Peskov, birthday greetings from foreign leaders now mostly come from countries Moscow considers "friendly."

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a congratulatory telegram to the president, calling him "my dearest comrade" and praising his "success in carrying out the sacred mission of reliably safeguarding the nation's dignity and core interests."

In his message, Kim also highlighted the Russian president's role in "building a new, multipolar world."

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Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said in his message that Putin's "political wisdom, exceptional devotion to the Motherland, and firm will in defending its national interests have earned you nationwide recognition and the respect of your foreign counterparts."

Despite relations between Moscow and Baku having grown increasingly strained in recent months, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev also congratulated the Russian leader, though details of their phone conversation were not disclosed.

Birthday greetings were also sent by Nicaraguan co-presidents Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo, who wished Putin good health and further success, and Turkmenistan President Serdar Berdimuhamedov, who praised Putin's personal role in developing friendly ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Russian officials appear to have been given instructions on how to greet Putin on his birthday. According to the exiled media outlet Agenstvo, they were told to publish a post on their personal VKontakte pages congratulating Putin and listing his accomplishments.

The president's 73rd birthday has also brought renewed attention to his health and longevity.

Putin's last publicly known vacation was in 2021, when he twice traveled to Siberia with then-Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. According to Peskov, the president sleeps only a few hours a day.

Putin has long been focused on maintaining his health, and famously set strict quarantine requirements for anyone who met with him during the Covid-19 pandemic. Reports suggest he relies exclusively on his team of doctors and explores alternative medicine.

Last month, he was caught in a hot-mic moment with Chinese leader Xi Jinping discussing new methods for prolonging human life, saying that "human organs can be constantly transplanted, to the extent that people can get younger, perhaps even immortal."

Under constitutional changes he pushed through in 2020, Putin could remain in power until 2036 — when he will be 83.

With no sign he wants to step down, that would make him the longest-ruling leader in Russian history, surpassing Josef Stalin.

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