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Putin Arrives in Tajikistan as Russia Seeks to Reassert Influence in Central Asia

By AFP

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Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon and Vladimir Putin. **Kremlin Press Service**

President Vladimir Putin arrived in Tajikistan on Wednesday night for a three-day visit aimed at shoring up Russia's influence in Central Asia, a region where Moscow's longstanding dominance has been increasingly challenged by China and the West.

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon welcomed Putin upon landing in the capital, Dushanbe. The Kremlin leader is scheduled to meet on Thursday with the leaders of the five Central Asian republics for talks expected to focus on regional security and economic cooperation.

Putin is accompanied by Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov, who on Wednesday visited a Russian military base in Tajikistan, one of Moscow's largest installations abroad.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov told state media that Putin is also expected to meet with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev on Thursday, following months of strained relations between Moscow and Baku.

Russia has sought to keep its foothold in Central Asia through energy deals, including agreements to supply natural gas and build nuclear power plants.

But Beijing has rapidly expanded its economic presence in the region, while the European Union has courted Central Asian leaders with promises of investment and infrastructure cooperation.

This year alone, Central Asia has hosted two major summits — one with the European Union in April and another with China in June — following a similar meeting with Turkey in 2024.

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