The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Fields Questions on War, Economy and Aliens at Annual Press Conference

December 19, 2025



Vladimir Putin at the annual televised call-in and news conference on Dec. 19, 2025. **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin held his annual news conference on Friday, which was once again folded into his televised "Direct Line" call-in show, fielding a wide range of questions, from the Ukraine war, road repairs and tax increases to reports of phone fraud, low birthrates and even the possibility of contact with extraterrestrial life.

At the start of the press conference portion of the highly choreographed event, which lasted over four hours this year, Putin immediately dived into questions about the Ukraine war, though little of what he said was new. On that front, he repeated accusations that Ukrainian officials are uninterested in signing a deal to end the fighting ahead of the full-scale invasion's fourth anniversary.

"After the talks in Istanbul, they initially agreed... and then backed out, throwing all of those agreements into the trash. And now, in effect, they are refusing to bring this conflict to an end through peaceful means," Putin told the large gathering of journalists

“Still, we see, feel and know that there are certain signals, including those coming from the Kyiv regime, indicating that they are prepared to engage in some form of dialogue,” he added, possibly hinting that peace talks led by the Trump administration could lead to some kind of breakthrough in the near future.

However, Putin was unwavering in his committment to address what he and other Russian officials routinely call the “root causes” of the war in Ukraine, shorthand for the Kremlin’s justifications for its full-scale invasion. He also insisted that Russia’s armed forces were making significant gains across the battlefield in eastern Ukraine, including the claimed capture of the city of Kupiansk.

Related article: France’s Macron Calls for Re-Engagement With Putin

Asked by an NBC news correspondent whether he would personally bear responsibility for the deaths of Ukrainians and Russians if the war continued into next year because he rejected a U.S.-brokered peace agreement with Ukraine, Putin said the blame would lie solely on the authorities in Kyiv.

“We did not start this war,” the Kremlin leader claimed, despite hvaing ordered the full-scale invasion in 2022. “This war began after the unconstitutional armed coup in Ukraine in 2014, followed by the launch of hostilities by the leaders of the Kyiv regime against their own citizens.”

In response to a question about the possibility of normalizing relations with NATO, Putin repeated his longstanding grievances with the Western military alliance in arguing that Russia was “deceived” when it was told that the alliance would not expand eastward toward its borders.

“This movement of military infrastructure toward our borders caused, and continues to cause, our legitimate concerns,” he said, adding that Russia was not “demanding anything out of the ordinary” in ongoing Ukraine peace talks.

“We are simply insisting on the fulfillment of the promises made to us and the commitments undertaken by our Western partners. We were misled, and we want to reach an agreement through which a reliable security system is established in Europe,” Putin said.

Related article: Russian Central Bank Slashes Key Rate to 16%

Ahead of the broadcast on Friday, state media reported nearly 3 million messages had been submitted from across Russia and beyond for Putin to address during the call-in segment, which is designed to showcase the president as personally engaged with the everyday concerns of ordinary Russians.

Many of those questions focused on areas where Russians view the government as failing to deliver, including state pensions, payments to soldiers fighting in Ukraine, medical prescription discounts, regular internet disruptions and prices at the supermarket.

Putin’s answers this year broke little new ground and followed familiar lines. Asked about

Russia's long-running demographic crisis, marked by persistently low birthrates, he pointed to countries like Japan that face similar challenges. The message: Russia is not unique, nor is the situation in the country as dire as some might believe.

In one of the more unusual moments of the press conference, a journalist from Western Siberia's Tyumen region asked Putin whether the Russian government suspected that the comet known as 3I/ATLAS was an intergalactic spaceship being piloted by extraterrestrials.

"I'll tell you, of course, but this should remain a secret. It's top secret information. It's our secret weapon, and we'll use it only if absolutely necessary," the Russian president joked, but then assured the journalist that the comet, which passed by the Earth on Friday, posed no threat to human life.

On the economy, Putin acknowledged that growth had slowed to around 1% this year, but sought to put a positive spin on that figure by noting that gross domestic product in Russia had risen by 9.7% over the past three years while the Eurozone saw just 3.1% growth over that same period.

He also addressed concerns about the government's recent decision to raise the value-added tax (VAT) from 20% to 22%, which takes effect next year. The tax burden for small businesses will also go up, with the annual revenue threshold for companies required to pay VAT being significantly lowered.

Putin indicated that officials did not plan for the consumption tax increase to be permanent. In his words, the move was necessary to address fiscal challenges facing the government amid huge spending on the military and falling energy revenues.

"The ultimate goal is to reduce the tax burden in the future. That is the direction the government intends to pursue," he said.

In traditional fashion, Putin answered a blitz of short questions as the call-in program and press conference approached its end, with the Russian leader answering questions about love, friendship, what motivates him in life and how he imagines Russia will be 200 years in the future.

Asked whether he has any true friends, the Putin leader said: "True friendship is selfless. Those who I consider my true friends carry themselves in a very restrained and dignified manner."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/12/19/putin-fields-questions-on-war-economy-and-aliens-at-annual-press-conference-and-call-in-program-a91483