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Vladimir Putin Uses New Year's Address to Rally Russians Around War

December 31, 2025



Vladimir Putin gives his traditional address ahead of 2026.

President Vladimir Putin used his traditional New Year's address on Wednesday to project an image of Russians as united behind the country's armed forces and the war in Ukraine, vowing victory on the battlefield as the conflict approaches its fourth year.

"You have taken on the responsibility to fight for your native land, for truth and justice," Putin said, addressing Russian troops on the front lines. "Millions of people across Russia, I assure you, are with you on this New Year's night."

"I congratulate all our soldiers and commanders on the coming New Year. We believe in you and in our victory," he added.

Dressed in a black suit and dark-blue tie and standing in front of the Kremlin, Putin said Russians were "united by a sincere, selfless and devoted love for Russia."

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"The strength of our unity determines the sovereignty and security of the Fatherland, its development and its future," he said, adding that "work, successes and achievements of each of us add new chapters to [Russia's] thousand-year history."

The address, broadcast first in the Far East before airing across the country's 11 time zones as midnight struck, is a long-standing New Year's tradition for Russian leaders dating back to the Soviet era.

This year's speech was noticeably muted and followed a familiar pre-war format. In his New Year's address at the end of 2022, Putin appeared flanked by uniformed soldiers, a more overtly martial image amid the early stages of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Dec. 31 also marks the 26th anniversary of Putin coming to power after former President Boris Yeltsin announced his resignation in 1999.

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