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Putin congratulates Trump, ignores Obama in New Year statement

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has snubbed outgoing US President Barack Obama on New Year by expressing his good wishes to President-elect Donald Trump instead.

In his annual New Year's greeting to his foreign counterparts, Putin also congratulated former US Presidents George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush without mentioning Obama, CNN reported Saturday.

Putin also expressed hope that Washington and Moscow could take "real steps" to improve ties after the 45th American president's inauguration on January 20.

The Russian head of state said he was optimistic that the two countries, “acting in a constructive and pragmatic manner, will be able to take real steps to restore the mechanisms of bilateral cooperation in various areas and take their interaction in the international arena to a whole new level.”

Directly addressing Trump in his message released by the Kremlin on Friday, Putin also addressed the significance of strong ties between Russia and the US.

“Major global and regional challenges that our countries have confronted in recent years clearly confirm that Russia-US relations are an important factor in ensuring stability and security in the modern world,” Putin said.

To make the situation more embarrassing for Obama, Putin also congratulated British Prime Minister Theresa May and former French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Even former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi received a New Year greeting from Putin.

Putin had congratulated Obama and his family in a separate statement on Friday, when he addressed Washington’s new measures against Moscow.

On Thursday, Obama ordered a series of new sanctions against Russia and expelled 35 Russian diplomats over allegations that they interfered in the US 2016 presidential election through cyber attacks.

Putin, however, said he was not going to retaliate and would rather wait until Trump takes office.

Trump took to his Twitter after Putin’s announcement and called the Russian president a “very smart” leader.

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde and International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach were among other officials whom Putin addressed in his annual statement.