

Putin Frolics in Snow With His Dogs

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President Putin, wearing apparel similar to that worn by Russia's Olympic athletes, playing with his shepherd and Akita Inu near Moscow. **Alexsey Druginyn**

President Vladimir Putin, who has made no secret of his fondness for animals, or at least being photographed with them, took center stage Wednesday in a series of new pictures showing him romping with his dogs in the snow.

Putin, wearing the white-and-red sportswear of the Sochi Winter Olympics, is pictured rolling in the snow with his dogs Yume, an Akita Inu, and Buffy, a Karakachan.

Yume was a three-month-old puppy when it arrived in Moscow as a gift from Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba last year.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov gave Buffy to Putin in 2010.

The Kremlin released the photos Wednesday, the same week that the world saw images of a surprised Putin being attacked by topless female protesters during a visit to Germany.

The Kremlin said the photos were taken on March 24 in the Moscow region, but did not

provide information about the precise location. Putin lives at his Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow.

Conspicuously missing in the photos is Putin's third dog, the black Labrador Koni. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Koni was still alive but at the age of 12 too old to join the frolicking.

"She is a lady of old age and moves slowly now," he told Interfax. "To avoid injuring the old lady, she is kept separately from the young horses."

Koni was presented to Putin by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in 2000. Shoigu at the time was the emergency situations minister.

Putin has carefully cultivated an image of a lover of animals and wildlife. Last year he made a motorized flight with cranes, while before that he sailed after whales in the Far East and put a tracking collar on a tranquilized Ussuri tiger.

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