

Following U.S. Airstrikes Against Syria, Trump's Russian Fans Run for the Door

They spent months hailing his presidency as a new opportunity for relations with Moscow, but now they're singing a different tune.

By [Kevin Rothrock](#)

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Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP

The day of Donald Trump's inauguration as president of the United States, a group of Russian Trump supporters hosted a party in Moscow. Filmed by the Russian nationalist TV channel TsarGrad and full of reporters, the event included lectures, giveaways, and photo ops. At the center of the spectacle was Maria Katasonova, a 21-year-old pro-Kremlin activist who campaigned tirelessly last year for Donald Trump, thousands of miles from the United States, even while she was running for office in Russia's parliamentary elections in September.

Related article: [Trump's Fans in Russia Welcome Him to Power, But the Buzz Is Fading](#)

This Friday morning, President Trump launched 59 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian airbase, leading the Russian government to suspend an airspace safety agreement — a token but nonetheless concrete gesture by the Kremlin, in an environment where hopes for U.S.-Russian rapprochement are rapidly disappearing.

Related article: [Why Russia Tore Up the Syria Airspace Safety Agreement](#)

For months, public figures like Katasonova and Konstantin Rykov hailed the coming of Donald Trump as the dawn of a new era in global politics. Their group has promoted an image called “The Triptych”: a trio of portraits featuring Donald Trump, French right-wing politician Marine Le Pen, and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On March 24, Katasonova even realized one of her dreams, meeting Le Pen in person, delivering a bouquet of blue roses and kissing her on each cheek.

At the time of this writing, on April 7, the day of the U.S. airstrikes against the Syrian government — an act Russian officials have described as an attack on a sovereign state — Katasonova has tweeted precisely nothing. And she’s gone silent on Facebook and Vkontakte, where her most recent activity occurred before Trump ordered the missile attack against Syria.

Katasonova did not respond to phone calls from The Moscow Times.

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The same is true of Konstantin Rykov, another prolific Trump supporter who’s helped promote his presidency in Russia, alongside Katasonova. The U.S. has launched missiles at a Russian ally, and he hasn’t written a thing about it on social media.

Katasonova and Rykov are extreme examples of a wider trend in the Russian media, where many pundits welcomed Trump’s presidential victory last year as an opportunity to improve Russian-U.S. relations.

When the election results were announced in November, Margarita Simonyan, chief editor of Russia Today, declared on Twitter that she was so thrilled with American voters that she felt [compelled](#) to drive around Moscow waving an American flag. On Friday, after President Trump ordered the airstrikes, she [tweeted](#) morbidly, “My friends, we had a chance, but that chanced has been spectacularly f@cked. And not by us, it should be said.”

Other pro-Kremlin figures, like Sergei Minaev, were more than a little disappointed in folks like Katasonova and Simonyan. Without naming anyone in particular, he tweeted:

Embed:

Очень хочется всех российских болельщиков Трампа, и участников вечеринки "Трамп наш президент" отправить в Сирию, в тот самый аэропорт

— Сергей Минаев (@SergeiMinaev) [April 7, 2017](#)

I'd really like all Trump's Russian supporters and the people who went to the "Trump is our president" party to head off to Syria right now — to the same airport [bombed by the Americans].

Following Friday's airstrikes, a popular Facebook group called "Russians for Donald Trump" even changed its name to "Russians for Donald Trump RIP." The community's organizer, Alexander Domrin, a professor at Moscow's National Research University Higher School of Economics, [explained](#) that hope in Trump is no longer justified.

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