

# News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

December 31, 2018



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## Meat and potatoes

Belarussian leader Alexander Lukashenko has [brought](#) four sacks of potatoes and pork fat — both staples of the eastern European nation’s cuisine — into the Kremlin as a New Year’s gift to Putin.

Putin took to ice on Red Square later that night and scored five goals in his team’s 14-10 victory during the traditional pre-New Year game as part of a Night Hockey League tournament.

## Season’s greetings

President Vladimir Putin [said](#) in a New Year letter to his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump that Moscow was ready for dialogue on a "wide-ranging agenda." The Kremlin said Russian-U.S. relations are “the most important factor for providing strategic stability and international

security.”

Putin also sent New Year greetings to other world leaders including prime ministers Theresa May of Britain — wishing "well-being and prosperity to the British people" — and Shinzo Abe of Japan, as well as Chinese President Xi Jinping.

### **Resettlement**

Thirty-six Russian children have been [repatriated](#) from Syria and Iraq aboard a Baghdad-Moscow charter flight under a program overseen by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Children’s rights ombudsperson Anna Kuznetsova [said](#) 36 more children of jailed or killed Islamic State\* members are planned to be brought to Russia from the war-torn countries in January.

### **Magic numbers**

Russia’s official statistics service has [revised](#) 2016 GDP data from contracting by 0.2 percent to growing by 0.3 percent. In 2017, the new data shows growth of 1.6 percent instead of 1.5 percent.

### **Products non grata**

Russia has [banned](#) manufacturing and agricultural products from Ukraine, including gas turbines, alcohol and chocolate.

Russia’s Economic Development Ministry [estimates](#) \$510 million worth of banned products were imported from Ukraine this year.

### **Expensive travel**

A government decree has [revised](#) the expected cost of the rail section of Russia’s bridge to the annexed Crimean peninsula from 16.9 billion rubles (\$243.1 million) to 19.9 billion rubles (\$286.1 million).

The rail section is expected to begin operations on Dec. 1, 2019.

### **Avalanche**

At least two people have [reportedly](#) been killed and nine rescued from a gold-mining company station in a series of avalanches in the Far East region of Khabarovsk.

One victim had been found dead and another died later at a first-aid station in the settlement of Mnogovershinny.

### **SAM upgrade**

Russia in 2019 will deploy the S-350 Vityaz new generation short-to-mid range surface-to-air defense missile complex, the Russian Defense Ministry said, in a long-planned move to replace its aging S-300 system.

## Cold turkey

Revelers this New Year's Eve will be banned from bringing alcohol and fireworks to historical sites in central Moscow, including Red Square. Moscow's City Hall [says](#) inspection zones with metal detectors will encircle Ulitsa Tverskaya, Manezhnaya Ploshchad, Ploshchad Revolutsii, Red Square, Ulitsa Varvarka and Zaryadye Park.

Fireworks displays will be [launched](#) from 31 locations throughout Moscow, among them a five-minute show over St. Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin best viewed from Red Square.

*Includes reporting from Reuters.*

*Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.*

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