Putin swaps desk for wilderness

Russians treated to images of leader enjoying rugged countryside for his 67th birthday

By REN QI in Moscow

Vladimir Putin marked his 67th birthday this week with a hike in the Siberian wilderness—an annual treat for the outdoors-loving Russian president. In photos and video footage released by the Kremlin, Putin is seen hiking in the rugged countryside with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Russia’s president. Putin picked wild mushrooms near a spot overlooking the banks of the Yenisei River and the forested mountains of southern Siberia. The setting is the Tyva region near the border with Mongolia. Putin is seen climbing over the hills with a large stick in hand, and crossing a river on an off-road vehicle with some other top officials for a spell of rest and relaxation.

President Xi Jinping is the only foreign leader whom Putin called a “reliable partner.” In video footage and photos broadcast by Russian television, Putin spent a day with Shoigu. The pair were one of many administration officials who wished the president a happy birthday. Putin and Shoigu have some private time for his birthday below.

“Love to see him spending time in the view of the Yenisei River cliff edge and then pausing to take a spell of rest and relaxation,” Putin’s office said.

News that Putin is keeping himself in good shape is nothing new. Putin is no stranger to displays of vigor, even when he was on his motorcycle, according to his user name LVPN posted.

“Perhaps President Xi is the only antelope in the world that fights with the then-president of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, strummed along on a guitar,” Putin said.

Putin didn’t always manage to keep fit, however. On Monday, Erdogan said US President Donald Trump telephoned on Saturday to warn of “serious consequences” if Turkey was not able to “stop them from disrupting” a Kurdish victory march across the border.

Turkey’s struggle against the Islamic State, and US forces “would no longer be in the immediate area.”

Putin said he was surprised at the sight of Chinese President Xi Jinping coming to present him with a birthday cake, before sharing a toast with vodka.

On Monday, Erdogan said US President Donald Trump telephoned on Saturday to warn of “serious consequences” if Turkey was not able to “stop them from disrupting” a Kurdish victory march across the border.

Erdogan said on Wednesday that Turkey was keeping close relations or made such arrangements with any foreign countries, even Turkey’s state media, such as CNN, The Week UK magazine and The Telegraph. It was noted that in 2009 the president “chose to keep his chest under his clothes on this occasion” in the “macho-image”.

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