

## Putin sends Bush Independence Day greeting

*by UPI*

MOSCOW -- Russian President Vladimir Putin sent U.S. President George Bush greetings on the U.S. Independence Day Wednesday with an optimistic tone.

After meeting with Bush in Kennebunkport, Maine, and Washington this week, Putin traveled to Guatemala, and his message was dispatched from Moscow, the Novosti news agency reported.

"We look confidently to further mutually beneficial cooperation," Putin's message said. "I am positive that despite differences, which are inevitable in an open and sincere dialogue, a line toward the comprehensive development of bilateral relations will be carried on."

One of the key differences that chilled relations between the two countries is the U.S. plan to build missile defense sites in the Czech Republic and Poland. The Bush administration also criticized Moscow for its human rights record, press freedom and its opposition to independence for the Serbian province of Kosovo, the report said.

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