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## **Putin's bridge to Crimea illustrates his power — and his regime's weak spot**

*Путінський міст до Криму демонструє його владу і слабкість режиму*

*Україна і Захід різко відреагували на відкриття Керчинського моста, назвавши його незаконним. Міст, побудований без згоди Києва, «є черговим порушенням Росією суверенітету і територіальної цілісності України», йдеться в заяві прес-секретаря ЄС.*

*Офіційний представник Держдепартаменту США Хізер Науерт закликала Росію не перешкоджати проходженню суден, які прямують в інші частини України.*

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putins-bridge-to-crimea-illustrates-his-power--and-his-regimes-weak-spot/2018/05/15/f42c13c4-5847-11e8-9889-07bcc1327f4b\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.917e1835358b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/putins-bridge-to-crimea-illustrates-his-power--and-his-regimes-weak-spot/2018/05/15/f42c13c4-5847-11e8-9889-07bcc1327f4b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.917e1835358b)

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday opened a \$4 billion bridge directly linking Russia to Crimea, giving him a propaganda victory that drew condemnation from the West and served as the latest demonstration of his personalized system of power.

Putin, clad in jeans and a jacket, walked on the Russian end of the 12-mile-long, four-lane bridge alongside the business mogul who built it — [Arkady Rotenberg](#), the president's former judo partner. Then Putin took the wheel and drove over the Kerch Strait of the Black Sea in an orange Kamaz dump truck — manufactured by a state-owned company headed by [Sergey Chemezov](#), Putin's KGB colleague in East Germany in the 1980s. Both Rotenberg and Chemezov are under U.S. sanctions.

Like many key moments of Putin's presidency, it was a made-for-TV event designed to showcase his resolve and authority. State television broadcast live from a camera mounted inside the truck cab as Putin threw it into gear and made small

talk with a construction worker sitting next to him. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had earlier told journalists that Putin's bridge project showed that "even the most ambitious plans can be realized when they are implemented by him."

*[\[Vote — or else: Crimea's propaganda machine fans fears in closing days of campaign\]](#)*

Putin annexed [Crimea](#), a Ukrainian peninsula in the Black Sea, in 2014 after claiming that ethnic Russians in the region were threatened by the country's pro-Western revolution. Starting Wednesday morning, up to 40,000 passenger cars a day will be able to cross the bridge, drastically reducing the time it takes Russians to reach Crimea, which until now was accessible from Russia only by plane or ferry.

Ukraine and the West slammed the bridge opening as illegal. The bridge, constructed without Kiev's consent, "constitutes another violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity by Russia," an E.U. spokesman said in a statement. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert called on Russia not to impede passing ships bound for other parts of Ukraine.