

10 Interesting Things Putin Said

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NOVO-OGARYOVO — In an interview with The Associated Press and state Channel 1 television, President Vladimir Putin discussed a wide range of issues, including disputes over the Syrian civil war, his relations with President Barack Obama, NSA leaker Edward Snowden and the rights of gays in Russia. Here are 10 interesting things he said in the interview late Tuesday:

On videos from Syria purporting to show victims of a suspected chemical weapons attack, which the U.S. government has blamed on the Syrian government:

"These are horrible pictures. The question is only who did it and what they did, and who is responsible for this. These pictures do not answer the questions I have just posed. There is an opinion that it's a compilation by these very rebels who are connected with al-Qaida and who are always distinguished by exceptional brutality."

On whether Russia would agree to military action if it became convinced that the attack was carried out by the Syrian government:

"I do not exclude this, but I would like to draw your attention to one absolutely key aspect. In line with international law, only the U.N. Security Council could sanction the use of force against a sovereign state. Any other pretext or method which might be used to justify the use of force against an independent sovereign state is inadmissible and can only be interpreted as an aggression."

On providing Syria with the S-300 air defense missile system:

"We have a contract for the delivery of the S-300s. We have supplied some of the components, but the delivery hasn't been completed. We have suspended it for now. But if we see that steps are taken that violate the existing international norms, we shall think how we should act in the future, in particular regarding supplies of such sensitive weapons to certain regions of the world."

On relations with Obama:

"President Obama hasn't been elected by the American people in order to be pleasant to Russia. And your humble servant hasn't been elected by the people of Russia to be pleasant to someone either. We work, we argue about some issues. We are human. Sometimes one of us gets vexed. But I would like to repeat once again that global mutual interests form a good basis for finding a joint solution to our problems."

On the body language between Putin and Obama that some have said suggested a difficult working relationship:

"There are some gestures, of course, that you can only interpret one way, but no one has ever seen those kinds of gestures directed by Obama at me or by me at Obama, and I hope that never happens. Everything else is fantasy."

On U.S. failure to bring Snowden home to face justice:

"Representatives of the American intelligence services — and I hope they won't be angry — but they could have been more professional, and the diplomats as well. After they found out that he was flying to us, and that he was flying as a transit passenger, there was pressure from all sides — from the Americans, from the Europeans — instead of just letting him go to a country where they could operate easily."

On gays in Russia:

"I assure you that I work with these people, I sometimes award them with state prizes or decorations for their achievements in various fields. We have absolutely normal relations, and I don't see anything out of the ordinary here. They say that Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky was a homosexual. Truth be told, we don't love him because of that, but he was a great musician, and we all love his music. So what?"

On the threat of terrorism at the Winter Games in Sochi in February:

"Terrorists are always a threat to someone. If we're scared of them, it means they have won. But that doesn't mean we can have a devil-may-care attitude toward this threat. We must do everything to stop these threats and not give the terrorists a single chance to demonstrate

their brutality and hatred of mankind."

On Alexei Navalny, the anti-corruption campaigner who is running for Moscow mayor following an embezzlement conviction widely seen as politically motivated:

"This gentleman has taken on the very fashionable theme of fighting corruption, and I say again, in order to fight corruption you have to be crystal clear yourself, but there are problems here, and in this regard I, unfortunately, have a suspicion that this is just a way of getting votes and not a genuine desire to solve the problem."

On pushes for political reform sought by the Russian intellectual elite:

"But we all should be aware of the fact that when revolutionary, not evolutionary, changes come, things can get even worse. The intelligentsia should be aware of this. And it is the intelligentsia specifically that should keep this in mind and prevent society from radical steps and revolutions of all kind. We've had enough of it. We've seen so many revolutions and wars. We need decades of calm and harmonious development."

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