

Russian Foreign Minister Swears During News Conference

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attends a news conference after a meeting in Moscow, Russia, August 11, 2015.

Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov caused a stir this week when a video of him swearing during Tuesday's news conference with his Saudi Arabian counterpart, Adel al-Jubeir, circulated on the country's media and social networks.

Forty minutes into the conference, while Lavrov's speech is being translated into Arabic, Russia's foreign minister can be heard quietly but distinctively muttering “imbeciles,” before adding an obscene five-letter word widely used in Russia. The Moscow Times cannot publish the word due to a law that bans the use of obscene language in media outlets.

The 90-minute video of the whole news conference, including this episode, was posted online by state-run TV channel RT. Two minutes later, Lavrov interrupted his own speech to reprove someone in the audience, saying angrily “Are we disturbing you?”

The new spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, who is herself well-known

for her blunt and emotional statements in social media and credited with the overall vulgarization of the ministry's communication style, claimed she hadn't heard Lavrov swear, the Govorit Moskva radio station reported Wednesday.

“I was present at the news conference and didn't hear anything like that. I can't comment on things I didn't hear,” she said in an interview with the radio station. “I don't have any comments on what was happening in the background,” Zakharova said.

This is not the first time Lavrov has made headlines for his use of obscene language. In 2008 he swore at his then-British counterpart David Miliband during a phone call.

Miliband “was subjected to a tirade of four-letter abuse when he spoke to his Russian counterpart over the country’s invasion of Georgia,” the Telegraph newspaper reported at the time.

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