

# Spies in Wigs

Russia's top diplomat holds his annual presser, praising the Trump era and Moscow's lone war on terror

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov speaks during his annual roundup news conference summing up his ministry's work in 2016, in Moscow, Russia, Jan. 17, 2017. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov took to the stage on Tuesday to hold his annual mega-press conference: a hallowed right of passage for Russia's top politicians.

The meeting, which lasted just more than two hours, saw hundreds of journalists fight it out to grill Russia's chief diplomat on Syria, Ukraine, and the rapidly approaching era of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Lavrov used the platform to confirm the United States' presence at Syria ceasefire talks, condemn liberal Western values, and spill the beans about cross-dressing U.S. spies.

The Moscow Times has picked the minister's key quotes. (Yes, we'll say more about the cross dressing.)

## **On Fighting Global Terror With Trump**

Talk of the U.S. president-elect dominated Lavrov's press conference, with the foreign minister praising the Republican candidate for his lack of "double-standards."

"Judging by what we hear from Trump and his team, we can see that they have a different approach," Lavrov said. "They don't want to have double standards, and they don't intend to use the fight against terrorism as a cover for personal interests."

Trump and his team will take the threat of terrorism "seriously — not like before," the minister said.

Lavrov also dismissed reports that U.S. senators are preparing new sanctions against Moscow in retaliation for alleged Kremlin interference in the U.S. presidential elections.

"The new administration will seek to understand the interests of their partners without any moralizing," he said.

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## **On Sneaky U.S. Spies — in Wigs**

Lavrov couldn't resist a parting blow at the outgoing Obama administration, telling reporters that U.S. intelligence agencies desperately tried to recruit Russian informers during the president's second term.

Lavrov said some American diplomatic staff even attended political rallies and illegal protests, and they regularly donned wigs and posed as women, in order to gain entrance to Russian government buildings, the minister claimed.

"You can draw the conclusions yourself," Lavrov said.

## **On Immoral Western Values**

Lavrov also blasted "Western values" as "post-Christian" and fundamentally at odds with Russian traditions.

"If we talk about much-touted Western values, then these are not the same values held by the ancestors of the European people.

"They are something new, modernized and permissive. They can be described as post-Christian — fundamentally at odds with the morals that our country passed from generation to generation and the principles that we want to pass down to our children and grandchildren."

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### **On "Exporting Revolution"**

Of course, pesky Westerners can't help but try and impose their values on everyone else, said Lavrov, but the Kremlin knows better.

Trying to export democracy "leads to nothing good," said Lavrov.

"Russia's stance on this is well known. There was already a time in this country [Soviet Russia] when we tried to 'export revolution,'" he said. "People have not learned from our mistakes."

The Arab Spring and Ukraine's Maidan Revolution can both be traced back to Western nations imposing their values, Lavrov said. The same, he added, goes for Syria.

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### **On Brokering Peace in Syria**

The Kremlin is inviting U.S. and U.N. officials to join peace talks on Syria, hosted in the Kazakh capital of Astana, alongside Turkey and Iran, the Kremlin confirmed.

"We hope that the new U.S. administration will be able to accept this invitation," the minister said. "It will be the first official step through which we can begin to discuss fighting terrorism in Syria."

The talks will focus on consolidating the ceasefire in the country, and involve commanders in the political process, Lavrov said.

Yet, if other countries are unable or unwilling to fight the Islamic State, the Russian Army is prepared to battle them alone. Lavrov stressed that Moscow is dedicated to the fight against terrorism, unlike the United States, he says. Russia's foreign minister maintained that U.S. troops only began to fight the Islamic State after Russian troops arrived in the region.

"Until then, it's no secret that the U.S. government used ISIS and other groups for their own interests in the region," Lavrov claimed.

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