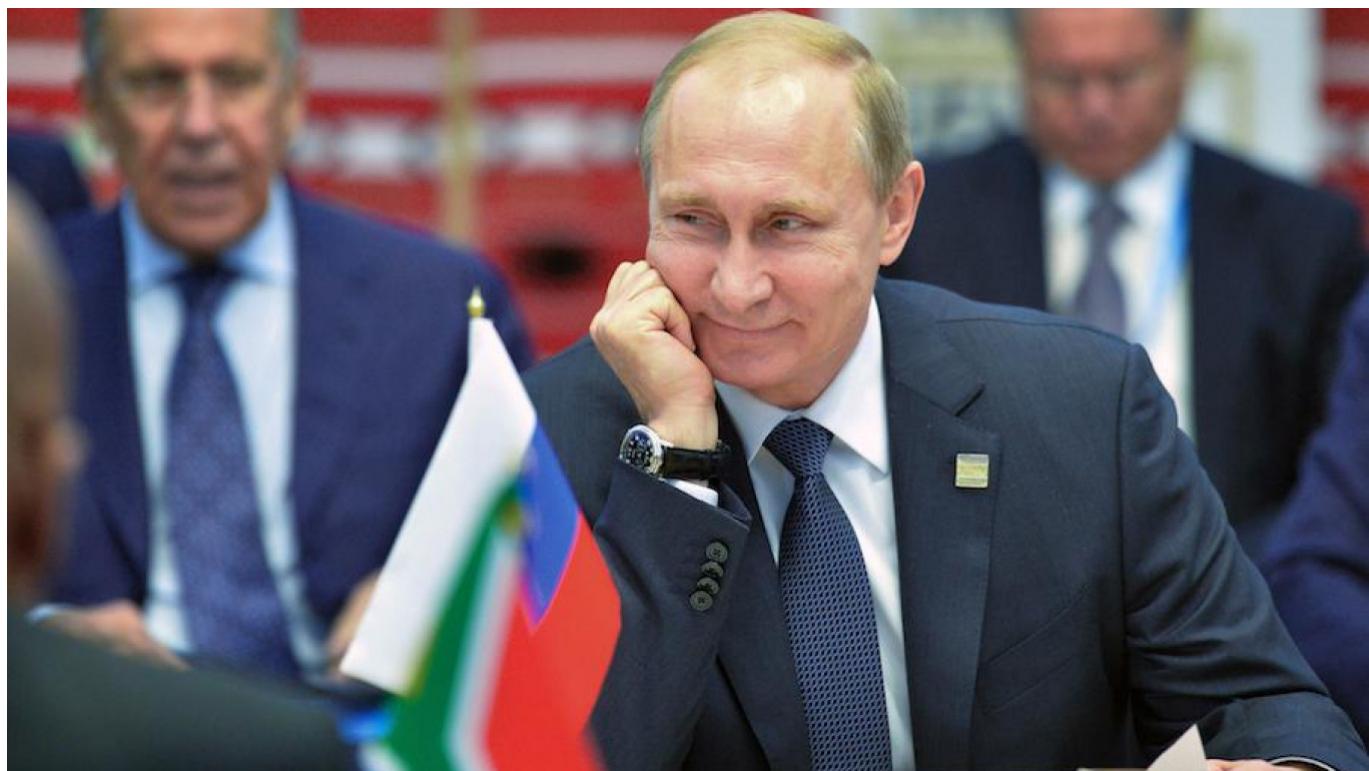


Trump 'Expects' Russia to Return Annexed Crimea

February 15, 2017



Alexei Druzhinin / AP

U.S. President Donald Trump expects the Russian government to return the annexed Crimean peninsula to Ukraine, [the White House announced on Tuesday](#).

White House spokesperson Sean Spicer told journalists on Tuesday that President Trump had been “incredibly tough on Russia.” He also claimed that the Obama administration had contributed to the Ukrainian crisis by “allowing [Crimea] to be seized by Russia.”

“President Trump has made it very clear that he expects the Russian government to deescalate violence in the Ukraine and return Crimea,” Spicer said. The spokesperson announced last week that sanctions against Russia would remain in place until Crimea was again under Ukrainian control.

Related article: [White House Says Russia Sanctions Will Remain Until Crimea Returned to Ukraine](#)

Trump's statements come as his government faces increasing scrutiny on ties with Russian officials before and after the U.S. presidential elections in 2016.

[The New York Times](#) and [CNN](#) published reports on Tuesday that claimed top Trump aides had contacted senior Russian intelligence agents in the year leading up to the Nov. 2016 elections.

Government sources said that while "communications between campaign staff and representatives of foreign governments were not unusual," calls made by the Trump team stood out due to officials' high-ranking status and the frequency of the calls.

The White House has denied the claims.

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