

What You Need to Know About Russia's Sergei Lavrov

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Sergei Lavrov **AP**

Russia's *Esquire* magazine has published a new in-depth profile with one of the country's most popular politicians, long-time Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The article — which describes Lavrov as a “blockbuster superhero in a perfectly fitted suit” — follows the minister as he travels across the globe, quizzing him on topics which range from his views on the Trump administration to his taste in music.

“The foreign minister's work stamina is legendary,” the author writes. “He is practically the first to arrive at the Smolensky [Foreign Ministry] building after business trips, no matter how long they've been[...] These stories create the impression that Lavrov is not a person but an absolute weapon designed only to pursue the government's interests in the global arena. A blockbuster superhero in a perfectly fitted suit, who even at home is called by his name and patronymic.”

The Moscow Times has made a [selection](#) of the [feature](#)'s most notable takeaways.

On his appearance

“Lavrov looks as if he has spent the past ten hours in a spa, not in a plane. He looks improbably fresh,” the feature's author writes.

Asked about his healthy physique, the 67-year-old Lavrov says: “To be honest, it's genetic. I thank my father and mother. And small things: stretches and using the exercise bike in the morning. On Sundays, I play football when possible.”

His only vice is smoking, even though he recently tried to cut down from 1.5 packs to four cigarettes a day. “Diplomatic discipline,” he explains. “You have to take a punch.”

'There are no rules anymore'

The author also asks Lavrov to compare modern politics to those of the Soviet past. "Which situation has been more difficult for Russia: the Reagan era, when the U.S.S.R was the dubbed the "empire of evil" for waging war Afghanistan, or the past three years?", he asks.

“Without a doubt, today,” Lavrov responds. “Then, there were two empires: the West and the Soviet Union, both of which fueled conflicts against their rival in third countries. But never within their own borders and never directly. Even the public rhetoric was softer. Neither camp crossed the boundaries of the permissible. There are no rules anymore.”

On Trump and the United States

Asked to define Russia's current relationship with the United States, Lavrov says: “Expectant.”

“Today, everything is moving slowly, because [former U.S. President Barack] Obama's people are still in their places,” he says. “We can't fully get to work, Trump's team is not complete yet. I don't know how much time that will take him. After [former U.S. President George W.] Bush, it took Obama eight months. I don't think Trump can do it faster.”

He is generally satisfied with the current U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, he says. “In general I have had friendly, if not good, relationships with all secretaries of state.”

The author also suggests that Lavrov was especially close to former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice - and that Lavrov may have even exploited the fact she “liked him.”

“Liked me? I doubt that!” Lavrov responds, reportedly smiling. “I just had a very warm and close relationship with Condoleezza.”

“In general, diplomats will use the harshest words against each other in public, each in the passionate defense of their respective countries. And then later they will sit and drink together.”

On whether or not he used expletives in 2008...

In 2008, Lavrov reportedly told then-British Foreign Minister David Miliband: “Who are you to fucking lecture me?” In his Esquire interview, Lavrov once again denies that claim.

“I told Miliband that one of the European ministers, in a face-to-face conversation with me called [ex-Georgian President] Mikheil Sakaashvili a 'fucking lunatic.' [So that story about my use of expletives] is a lie by the Brits.”

Family Man

Ultimately, the article suggests, Lavrov is also just a man.

Lavrov's daughter Yekaterina describes him as a family man. “My father never missed a parent's meeting while we lived in New York,” she is cited as saying. “He used to check my academic papers, taught me how to drive, was the first to read my dissertation.”

Lavrov, who himself dabbles in poetry, describes playing the guitar and writing as his personal interests. He singled out Vladimir Vysotsky, Sergei Yesenin and Alexander Blok as particular favorites.

Asked about his music tastes, he replies: “I like folk, jazz. I like how [Igor] Butman plays. And of course I like The Beatles. And [Frank] Sinatra.”

But football is the minister's biggest passion, he says. Asked about his strategy to sit through long and repetitive negotiation sessions, he says: “I'm always thinking about [Moscow football team] Spartak.”

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