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Moscow Meeting Canceled After Dutch Foreign Minister Resigns for Lying About Meeting Putin

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Dutch Foreign Minister Halbe Zijlstra **Jasper Juinen / Bloomberg**

A meeting between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Dutch counterpart on Wednesday has been canceled after the Dutch minister resigned over lying about having met President Vladimir Putin more than a decade ago.

Dutch Foreign Minister Halbe Zijlstra on Tuesday evening handed in his resignation, saying it had been "the biggest mistake of my career" to lie about meeting the Russian president in 2006.

For years, Zjilstra claimed he had personally overheard Putin during a meeting in Moscow speaking of a "Greater Russia" that included Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic states. Putin allegedly added: "Kazakhstan was nice to have too."

Zijlstra this week admitted it was former Royal Dutch Shell CEO Jeroen van der Veer who had

met Putin. Van der Veer has publicly distanced himself from the comments.

The meeting scheduled for Wednesday would have been Zijlstra's first trip to Russia as foreign minister and was considered politically important in the Netherlands, with the investigation into the downed flight MH17, in which 193 Dutch citizens died, high on the agenda.

Ahead of the meeting, Russia's Foreign Ministry in an online statement complained of an "unprecedented anti-Russian media campaign" in the Netherlands, and accused the country of bias in the MH17 probe.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova in a Facebook post confirmed the meeting had been canceled. "Does this need further comment?" she asked. "I'd rather read yours."

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