

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

July 23, 2018



Maria Butina / Vkontakte

Agent of influence

Accused Russian agent Maria Butina met two senior U.S. Federal Reserve and Treasury Department officials in 2015, [according](#) to think-tank documents that suggest she sought to cultivate high-powered connections with American political leaders and special interest groups.

Meanwhile, the FBI [released](#) documents related to the surveillance of former Trump presidential campaign adviser Carter Page. In October 2016, the reports noted “the FBI believes that Page has been collaborating and conspiring with the Russian Government.”

Asset recovery

Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [told](#) his U.S. counterpart that Butina had been

detained on “fabricated charges” and should be released.

On a phone call aimed at improving bilateral relations in the wake of the recent U.S.–Russia summit in Helsinki, Lavrov told Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Butina’s arrest in the U.S. last week was unacceptable.

Pension promises

President Vladimir Putin [announced](#) Friday he will review government plans to raise the retirement age, a sign he may soften the unpopular reform, Reuters reported. The legislation, sponsored by Putin’s government, would balance state finances but has caused historic dips in the president’s popularity.

“There is no final decision,” said Putin during a visit to Kaliningrad. “I will need to hear all opinions and points of view on this issue.”

Missile treason

An employee of Russia’s leading space research lab has been [arrested](#) on charges of state treason after a suspected leak of hypersonic missile secrets to the West. The arrest of Central Research Institute of Machine Building (TsNIIImash) researcher Viktor Kudryavtsev, 74, was confirmed in Russian media on Sunday. Dmitry Payson, the former head of research at the United Rocket and Space Corporation, will [be](#) a witness, Interfax reported.

Meanwhile, the names of espionage suspects will no longer be publicly [available](#) in Moscow’s court database because they will be classified as top secret, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Related article: [Protesters Rally Outside State Duma in Moscow Over Pension Reform](#)

Tortured justice

Seventeen prison guards have been [fired](#) after Russian authorities launched an abuse investigation into a recently published video of torture at a penal colony in Yaroslavl.

Local investigators initially [denied](#) reports that one of the Yaroslavl penal colony guards had been arrested.

Terror strikes

Russian and Syrian jets [stepped](#) up their bombing of an Islamic State bastion along the Jordan–Israel border in Syria as the terrorist group pushed into areas abandoned by other rebels, diplomatic and opposition sources told Reuters.

Russia's military said it had also shot down two unidentified drones that attacked its air base at Hmeimim in northern Syria over the weekend, Russian agencies reported.

Terror costs

Russian telecom operators will have to [raise](#) charges by up to 10 percent to implement new laws forcing them to store data in the country, a Federal Security Service (FSB) analysis estimated

The requirement to store six months of phone calls, text messages and online traffic will cost an estimated \$1.73 billion, 10 percent of the \$17.32 billion total revenue earned by telecom operators in 2017, according to Communications Ministry data.

Police deaths

Two police officers in Russia's volatile Dagestan republic were [killed](#) when their patrol was attacked by gunmen, Reuters reports.

Security forces in the Muslim-majority republic often face militant violence.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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