

Lavrov Holds Annual Press Conference, Ridicules Idea That Trump is Russian Spy

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Sergei Lavrov / Russian Foreign Ministry

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held his annual press conference on Wednesday, answering journalists' questions on a range of foreign policy issues including Western sanctions and Russia's negotiations with Japan over a string of disputed islands.

In his answers, Russia's top diplomat derided suggestions that Trump was a Russian spy or that Moscow was happy over Britain's Brexit troubles.

Here are the highlights:

On allegations that Trump is a Russian Spy:

— “To be frank, it's getting hard for me to comment on what's happening in the U.S. regarding the allegations that Trump is a Russian spy. I believe [it reflects] the falling

standards for journalism in the American press."

— "I can't believe that journalists in the U.S. are genuinely and professionally dealing with these questions."

On sanctions:

- Lavrov said Russia would reciprocate the possible lifting of any anti-Russian sanctions "very quickly."
- He rejected anti-Russian measures as an "attempt to dictate unfair competition through sanctions or other avenues," noting that such attempts "have become more and more popular in the West, especially in the U.S."

On Brexit:

— "They say constantly that Russia is rubbing its hands with glee [over Brexit] — this is not true. We always said — long before the idea of Brexit took shape — that it is in our interests to have a united, strong, and most importantly independent European Union."

Related article: [Lavrov: We're Not Rubbing Our Hands With Glee Over Brexit](#)

On Paul Whelan, the ex-U.S. marine detained on spying charges in Moscow:

— "He was caught red-handed. He was detained at the moment he was carrying out specific illegal actions in his hotel."

On negotiations with Japan on the disputed Kuril islands

— Lavrov said a Russian desire to normalize relations with Tokyo meant it agreed to step up talks about signing a World War II peace treaty with Japan.

— Russia's top diplomat suggested that "Japan is the only country in the world which cannot say: 'I accept the results of World War Two in their entirety,'" when answering a question about the Kuril Islands, which Soviet troops captured at the end of World War II in a move that Japan disputes.

Related article: [Russia Asks Japan to Recognize the Outcome of World War II](#)

— "No one ever made agreements on the return of these territories, it directly contradicts Japan's obligations under the UN Charter."

On attempts to salvage the INF Treaty:

— "We are ready as before to work on saving the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. I hope that the European nations that are most interested in this will also put in the effort to not follow the American position."

On Venezuela:

— “We have heard suggestions that point toward [U.S.] military involvement in Venezuela and suggestions that the United States will not recognize Nicolas Maduro as the President of Venezuela but as a representative of parliament. All this is very alarming.”

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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