

# News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

November 25, 2019



Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev at the United Russia congress [Kremlin.ru](https://www.kremlin.ru)

## ‘Loudmouths and opportunists’

President Vladimir Putin [warned](#) party faithful that “loudmouths and opportunists” could betray both Russia and the pro-Kremlin United Russia party, and urged them to “rankle and agitate” local officials into action.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who launched United Russia’s campaign for the 2021 State Duma elections at the party’s congress Saturday, echoed Putin’s remarks. “The cost of mistakes is too high to afford,” Medvedev told members of the party reeling from declining polling numbers.

## Spies in Catalonia

Spain has arrested a Russian and a Ukrainian national on suspicion of espionage, the El Mundo newspaper [reported](#) Saturday.

Police reportedly found an M-75 grenade “in mint condition” when the two men were arrested in Catalonia on Oct. 4. The suspects are reportedly linked to an alleged senior Russian military intelligence official who Spanish officials [named](#) in their investigation into Catalonia’s 2017 independence referendum.

### **Wagner scrutiny**

A second man believed to be one of several Russian speakers who filmed themselves beheading and setting fire to a purported Syrian army defector in 2017 teaches patriotism courses to Russian schoolchildren, the news website Fontanka [reported](#).

**Related article:** [Russian Mercenaries Linked to Gruesome Syrian Torture and Beheading Video](#)

The man, identified as 39-year-old Ruslan, denied involvement and maintained that he has only learned about the Wagner mercenary group implicated in the gruesome murder from television.

### **Putin firing**

Then-Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov had twice tried to fire Putin as the chief of the Federal Security Service (FSB) only to be denied by Boris Yeltsin in the 1990s, the former president’s chief of staff Valentin Yumashev [said](#).

Yeltsin picked Putin as his successor in 1999 because he saw in him a determined next-generation reformer, Yumashev said in an interview Friday. He said he’s “99% confident” that Putin will say that he will step down after his presidential term ends in 2024.

### **Next envoy**

U.S.-Russian ties will improve if Moscow adheres to Ukrainian ceasefire agreements and disavows “efforts to undermine our democratic processes,” Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan [told](#) Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Japan.

President Donald Trump nominated Sullivan to replace Jon Huntsman, who stepped down as U.S. ambassador to the United States in October after two years in Moscow.

### **Arctic investment**

State-owned bank VTB [said](#) it plans to invest 1 trillion rubles (\$15.6 billion) into Arctic projects over the next two years.

The U.S.-sanctioned bank plans to allocate 195 billion rubles (\$3 billion) for the state nuclear agency Rosatom to build five nuclear icebreakers as Russia seeks to open year-round shipping lanes in the Arctic, VTB deputy president Valery Lukyanenko said.

*Includes reporting from Reuters.*

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