

Putin's NBC News Interview, In Quotes

June 14, 2021



The wide-reaching interview aired days before Putin is set to meet with U.S. President Joe Biden to discuss a slew of disagreements. **Screenshot / NBC News**

Russian President Vladimir Putin brushed off allegations of hacking and involvement in jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's poisoning in his first interview with U.S. media in three years.

During the NBC News [interview](#), which aired ahead of his bilateral summit with U.S. President Joe Biden, Putin spoke with interviewer Keir Simmons for 90 minutes on a range of topics expected to come up during the talks.

Here are some of the key quotes:

On Biden

- Putin described Biden as a "career man" who has spent his life in politics.
- "It is my great hope that, yes, there are some advantages, some disadvantages, but there will not be any impulse-based movements on behalf of the sitting U.S. president."

On whether he is a "killer," as Biden asserted earlier this year

— "Over my tenure, I've gotten used to attacks from all kinds of angles and from all kinds of areas under all kinds of pretext and reasons and of different caliber and fierceness, and none of it surprises me," he said, adding that the term "killer" was a "macho" term common in Hollywood.

On Navalny

— "We don't have this kind of habit, of assassinating anybody," Putin said when asked if he ordered Navalny to be killed, as the Kremlin critic claims.

— "Look, such decisions in this country are not made by the president," Putin said when asked if he could guarantee that Navalny would get out of prison alive.

— "He will not be treated any worse than anybody else."

— When pressed by Simmons about his [refusal](#) to mention Navalny by name, Putin said: "I don't care. I don't care."

On cyberattack allegations against Russia-based hackers

— "Where is the proof? It's becoming farcical. We have been accused of all kinds of things, election interference, cyber attacks and so on and so forth, and not once, not one time, did they bother to produce any kind of evidence or proof, just unfounded accusations."

— "It is our great hope that we will be able to set up this process [of cooperation on fighting cybercrime] with our U.S. partners."

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In an NBC News worldwide exclusive, Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke with [@KeirSimmons](#) for a rare interview addressing many issues that will be on the table with President Biden later this week, including human rights and cyberattacks. pic.twitter.com/BAmVsU5dXe

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On accusations of Russia's role in destabilizing activities including election meddling and cyberattacks

— "I'm surprised that we have not yet been accused of provoking the Black Lives Matter movement."

— "We have a saying: 'Don't be mad at the mirror if you are ugly.' It has nothing to do with you personally. But if somebody blames us for something, what I say is, why don't you look at yourselves? You will see yourselves in the mirror, not us."

On accusations that Russia is stifling its opposition

— "You are presenting it as dissent and intolerance towards dissent in Russia. We view it completely differently."

On whether Russia is open to a prisoner swap with the U.S.

— "Yes, of course."

— When asked about Trevor Reed and Paul Whelan, two ex-U.S. Marines imprisoned in Russia who could be part of a prisoner swap, Putin called Reed a "troublemaker" and a "drunk" who "got himself s**t-faced and started a fight."

Related article: [Russia Ready to Exchange Cyber Criminals With U.S., Putin Says](#)

On Russian military buildup near Ukraine's borders that stoked tensions this spring

— Pointing to NATO exercises near Russia's borders, Putin said: "Imagine if we sent our troops into direct proximity to your borders. What would have been your response?"

On [reports](#) that Russia plans to deliver an advanced satellite system to Iran

— "It's just fake news. At the very least, I don't know anything about this kind of thing. Those who are speaking about it probably know more about it. It's just nonsense, garbage."

On the Black Lives Matter movement

— "There are some grounds for it. ... We have always treated with understanding the fight of African Americans for their rights."

— Putin added that he couldn't condone "extreme" behavior carried out by the movement.

On former U.S. President Donald Trump

"I believe that former U.S. president Trump is an extraordinary individual, talented individual... He is a colorful individual. You may like him or not. But he didn't come from the U.S. establishment."

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