

Navalny Accuses West of ‘Falling Into Putin’s Trap’ on Ukraine

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Anna Ustinova / TASS

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has urged Western governments to ignore Russian President Vladimir Putin’s security demands instead of “falling into his trap” of trying to prevent a possible invasion of Ukraine through negotiations.

Washington and its allies have voiced increasingly grave concerns that Russia plans to attack Ukraine with the 100,000 troops it has massed near Kyiv's borders. But the Western allies have rejected Moscow’s key demands that NATO never grant Ukraine membership and scale back its troops and missiles from eastern Europe.

Navalny, in a series of letters with Time magazine published Wednesday, accused the West of “falling into Putin’s elementary traps.”

Related article: [Navalny Says ‘No Regrets’ on Anniversary of Return to Russia](#)

“Instead of ignoring this nonsense, the U.S. accepts Putin’s agenda and scrambles to organize some meetings,” Navalny wrote.

“That’s exactly what Putin needs since the opposite assumes ‘If you don’t attack Ukraine, then we won’t impose sanctions’,” he added.

Navalny and his supporters have [lobbied](#) for Western sanctions against key figures close to Putin since the poisoned Kremlin critic's January 2021 detention. U.S. senators last week introduced sanctions on high-level officials, including [Putin himself](#), that would pass if Russia invaded Ukraine.

Navalny argued that linking the threat of Western economic retaliation to a Russian invasion of Ukraine is part of Putin’s “fraud and deception” to avoid being targeted by personal sanctions.

“These ‘two-way moves’ are elementary and obvious, but it just takes my breath away, watching how Putin pulls this on the American establishment again and again,” he said.

“The combo is complete: Putin doesn’t have to fear the nearly adopted sanctions against his friends,” Navalny added, accusing the Biden administration of offering the Russian president a “carrot” in exchange for standing down in Ukraine.

Western leaders have for months warned that Russia’s troop buildup near Ukraine could indicate plans to invade its western neighbor — which Russian officials have repeatedly denied.

Russia last week held a series of largely fruitless talks with the U.S., NATO and Europe’s top security body OSCE to extract demands from the Western allies.

In hopes of easing tensions, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken this week visited Ukraine and plans to meet European allies in Berlin, followed by talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday in Geneva.

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