

Britain's Top Diplomat 'Mocked' Over Russia Trip Gaffes

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British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held short talks in Moscow on Thursday over the Ukraine standoff. **Russian Foreign Ministry / TASS**

The British Embassy in Moscow was forced Thursday to clarify a series of remarks made by Foreign Minister Liz Truss during a tense meeting with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

In the closed-door meeting, Lavrov had asked Truss whether the U.K. accepted that two Russian regions — Voronezh and Rostov — belonged to Russia and that Russia had the right to move troops and equipment to the areas.

According to Russia's Kommersant business daily, Truss [replied](#) that “the U.K. will never recognize Russian sovereignty over these regions.”

Commentators said the British politician likely thought Lavrov was referring to Donetsk and Luhansk — the two breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Russian separatists. Truss was quickly corrected by the British Ambassador in the meeting.

Hours after the meeting, Truss clarified the remarks to Russian media outlets and the British Embassy in Russia also released a statement from the foreign minister, stating: “During the meeting, it seemed to me that minister Lavrov was talking about a part of Ukraine. I have clearly indicated that these regions [Rostov and Voronezh] are part of sovereign Russia.”

Related article: [Russia Says Ultimatums, Threats on Ukraine Are 'Road to Nowhere'](#)

The slip-up was just one of a series of tense moments in Truss’ visit to Moscow, which was designed to convince Russia to pull back the 100,000 troops it has amassed near the Ukrainian border.

But Lavrov blasted Truss in their joint press conference held after the talks Thursday, saying the conversation was like “a mute talking to a deaf,” that the British side came completely unprepared and offered nothing but soundbites.

The British press also highlighted the barbed exchange, dubbing it a “[stinging attack](#)” by Russia’s veteran foreign affairs chief Lavrov, who had set out to “[mock](#)” his British counterpart.

Truss — who also posed for a [photo op](#) in a [fur hat](#) on Red Square, evoking Margaret Thatcher’s famous trip to the Russian capital at the end of the Cold War — was also seen fluffing her opening lines in the meeting with Lavrov, talking over translators and being told to calm down by her Russian counterpart.

Embed:

Obviously I get Truss was trying to channel Thatcher with this visit, but she must have been absolutely boiling in that outfit – it's unseasonably warm in Moscow, was 2°C yesterday pic.twitter.com/FwimLduskF

— max seddon (@maxseddon) [February 10, 2022](#)

British tabloids also [highlighted](#) the “awkward moment” when Lavrov appeared to walk off at the end of the pair’s joint press conference without offering a handshake, leaving Truss on the podium by herself.

Truss had previously been criticized in both Moscow and Britain for apparently [confusing](#) the “Baltic” and “Black” Seas earlier in February when discussing Russian military exercises and troop movements.

Russia’s foreign minister also has form when it comes to undermining Western diplomats in [trips](#) to Moscow. A high-profile gaffe-filled visit to Moscow last year by EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borell — when he was said to have been “[outplayed and humiliated](#)” — caused consternation in many European capitals.

The U.K. has positioned itself alongside the U.S. as one of the leading voices calling for Russia to de-escalate the situation around Ukraine and promising swift and severe sanctions should Russia mount a further incursion into Ukrainian territory.

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