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Russian Spy Chief Confirms Call With CIA Counterpart

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SVR chief Sergei Naryshkin. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), confirmed Wednesday that he held a phone call with CIA director William Burns in the days after Wagner's mercenary mutiny last month.

The New York Times and Wall Street Journal, citing anonymous U.S. officials, reported that Burns had called Naryshkin in late June to reassure him that Washington played no role in the aborted Wagner rebellion.

Naryshkin described the June 23-24 mutiny as a "pretext" for Burns' call in comments made to the state-run TASS news agency.

"I think it was more of a pretext because the main part of the conversation was focused on discussing issues and events related to Ukraine," he said.

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"We were thinking, discussing what to do about Ukraine," Naryshkin added, describing the hour-long conversation with Burns.

The CIA declined to comment on Burns' phone call with Naryshkin, The New York Times reported.

Naryshkin met Burns in Turkey last November for talks that Washington denied were "negotiations of any kind" on resolving the conflict in Ukraine.

An anonymous White House National Security Council spokesperson said the CIA chief had in 2022 warned his Russian counterpart about the consequences of Moscow's nuclear escalation.

Naryshkin's characterization of his latest phone talks with Burns suggested that Moscow and Washington may be holding secret peace talks despite U.S. President Joe Biden's "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine" policy.

In comments to TASS on Wednesday, Naryshkin said "a possibility exists" of a second face-to-face meeting with Burns.

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