

# Putin Awards Former Serbian Spy Chief Order of 'Friendship'

January 31, 2024



Serbia's former spy chief Aleksandar Vulin. **Darko Vojinovic / AP / TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has awarded Serbia's former top spy with the Order of Friendship for maintaining close ties between the two countries' intelligence agencies, the nationalist political party that the ex-spy chief heads [announced](#) Tuesday.

Aleksandar Vulin, who resigned from Serbia's Security and Information Agency in November, received the state decoration from Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service chief Sergei Naryshkin at its Moscow headquarters.

"Naryshkin noted that the high award is a well-deserved recognition of the continuous efforts to comprehensively develop Russian-Serbian relations and cooperation between the Russian and Serbian special services," the Movement of Socialists party said in a statement.

Vulin, 51, founded the left-wing nationalist party in 2008.

**Related article: [Russian Diaspora in Serbia Shaken By Election Protests, Fears of Moscow's Influence](#)**

The United States sanctioned Vulin last year for alleged corruption, involvement in drug trafficking and helping Russia expand its influence in the Balkans.

The ex-spy chief said he resigned from his high-ranking post due to pressure on Belgrade from Washington and Brussels, accusing the West of “asking for my head in order not to impose sanctions on Serbia.”

Serbia and Russia have historically close ties and Belgrade did not join international sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine, though it did condemn Russia's aggression at the UN.

Serbia is almost entirely dependent on Russian gas.

Moscow also backs Belgrade over the issue of Kosovo, rejecting its independence and helping block the territory from becoming a member of the United Nations.

Vulin is among the few senior European officials to have visited Russia after the latter invaded its Slavic neighbor Ukraine in 2022.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/01/31/putin-awards-former-serbian-spy-chief-order-of-friends-hip-a83930>