The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Fact-Check: Tucker Carlson Interviews Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

By Charlie Hancock

December 06, 2024



Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sits for an interview with Tucker Carlson **Russian Foreign Ministry Press Service**

Controversial right-wing personality Tucker Carlson returned to Russia to interview Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov following a high-profile interview with President Vladimir Putin in February. Their coversation covered topics such as U.S.-Russian relations, Washington's foreign policy and Russia's recent use of the Oreshnik missile.

Throughout the interview, Lavrov repeated standard Russian talking points about the war in Ukraine and cast doubt over the veracity of the Bucha massacre, as well as the poisonings of Alexei Navalny and Sergei and Yulia Skripal using the Novichok nerve agent.

The Moscow Times scrutinized several claims made in the interview.

American servicemen are launching Western long-range missiles into Russia — Lavrov and

Carlson

When Carlson announced this interview, he said explicitly that "American military personnel launched missiles into mainland Russia," while Lavrov claimed that Ukraine would not be able to do so without U.S. servicemen.

There is no evidence that American servicemen are launching ATACMS or any other Western missile systems either into Russia or at targets in Ukraine. Kyiv uses HIMARS platforms to launch its U.S.-donated ATACMS missiles. Ukrainian servicemen were trained by U.S. personnel on how to use them in the United States, Germany and Poland.

Russia did not start the war in Ukraine — Lavrov

Like Putin, Lavrov tried to blame NATO and the West for the war in Ukraine, insisting that Russia did not start it despite launching a full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022 and trying to capture the capital, Kyiv.

Related article: 5 Claims From Putin's Tucker Carlson Interview, Fact-Checked

Russia is 'not talking about exterminating anyone's population' with nuclear weapons — Lavrov

Since the start of the war, Russian officials have referenced their country's nuclear arsenal over 200 times. Many of these statements — including some by Lavrov — referenced nuclear escalation "spiraling out of control" with deadly consequences in a pattern analysts say are aimed at deterring Western support to Ukraine.

Furthermore, propagandists on state television have boasted that Russia could use nuclear weapons to destroy NATO member states, including wiping out Britain with a radioactive tsunami.

Casting doubt over the Bucha massacre — Lavrov

Lavrov, like many other Russian officials, has claimed that evidence that Russian forces massacred civilians in the Ukrainian city of Bucha was staged and "blatantly provocative."

This is despite evidence ranging from witness testimony and captured video to intercepted phone and radio communications of Russian units and satellite imagery showing bodies strewn in the streets during the occupation.

While Lavrov did not explicitly say that no massacre took place in this interview, he told Carlson that he repeatedly asked the UN to provide Russia with an official list of people killed in order to substantiate the accusations leveled against Russia's forces. However, the identities of the massacre's victims are not a secret: morgues in the city published lists of identified and unidentified bodies, and the Bucha City Council told The Insider that a verified list was available on request.

Related article: Why Russia Embraces Tucker Carlson

Did the Russians really poison Navalny? — Lavrov

Similarly, Lavrov suggested that the West was hiding the results of tests in a German hospital that determined the now-dead Kremlin critic was poisoned with Novichok, a nerve agent developed in Russia. However, a clinical report from Navalny's doctors at the Berlin Charité Hospital was released in the prestigious Lancet medical journal in January 2021. Navalny called the report's publication "proof of the poisoning Russia keeps demanding."

Plans for British naval bases on the Azov Sea – Lavrov

In 2021, London and Kyiv signed an agreement to enhance Ukraine's naval capabilities. This included agreements to produce new warships as well as the construction of two new naval bases on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

However, these plans were for Ukrainian bases constructed with British support, not British Royal Navy bases on Ukrainian territory.

Zelensky is no longer the 'democratically elected president of Ukraine' — Carlson

Ordinarily, Zelensky's term as president would have ended in May 2024, following elections that March. However, elections in Ukraine are explicitly prohibited under martial law, which was declared on Feb. 24, 2022.

Despite this, some critics have claimed it is unconstitutional for Zelensky to remain president. However, constitutional lawyers told The Kyiv Independent — which has been critical of Zelensky's government — that he is legally allowed to do so and that elections could not be held in wartime. The European Commission found that while martial law infringed on some fundamental rights of Ukrainian citizens, these temporary restrictions were proportional to the crisis.

Zelensky banned peace negotiations with Russia — Lavrov

This claim, which Putin also made in his conversation with Carlson, is incorrect. Zelesnky's bill prohibited negotiations with Putin but left the door open for discussions with another Russian president.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/12/06/fact-check-tucker-carlson-interviews-russian-foreign-minister-sergei-lavrov-a87253