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Lavrov Out of Favor With Putin?: Reports Force the Kremlin to Comment

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Sergei Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia. **Russian Foreign Ministry**

The Kremlin has had to dismiss reports that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had "fallen out of favor" with President Vladimir Putin amid speculation that Lavrov's diplomacy led to the cancellation of planned peace talks between Moscow and Washington over Ukraine.

"There is nothing true in these reports," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday.

"Lavrov is certainly continuing to serve as foreign minister," Peskov said when asked whether Lavrov remained in his post.

Reports that Putin was dissatisfied with Lavrov's performance emerged after U.S. President Donald Trump abruptly called off his planned summit with the Russian leader in Budapest last month.

The Financial Times claimed the meeting was shelved following what it described as "a tense

call" between Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, adding that "officials were struck by the intransigence of Lavrov."

"Lavrov is clearly tired and seems to think he has better things to do than meet or engage with the United States, whatever President Putin may want," a person familiar with the matter told the Financial Times.

Following the summit's cancellation, Lavrov was notably the only permanent member of the Security Council absent from its Tuesday meeting, during which Putin instructed officials to draft proposals for resuming nuclear tests.

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The Kommersant business daily, citing unidentified sources, reported that the minister's absence from the Security Council meeting was "coordinated."

In addition, Lavrov will no longer lead Russia's delegation to the upcoming G20 summit — a role that will instead be taken by Maxim Oreshkin, deputy chief of the presidential administration.

The Russian delegation to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, which has been led by Lavrov in recent years, was last month headed by Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk.

Nezygar, a Telegram channel with 400,000 subscribers, cited unidentified sources as saying that Putin held "a serious conversation" with Lavrov after his call with Rubio.

"Lavrov was unprepared for the dialogue with Rubio and conducted it in an extremely tense manner, refusing to engage in a discussion with the Secretary of State. It is likely that Lavrov followed the Kremlin's instructions too literally," Nezygar's sources said.

A source familiar with the Foreign Ministry told Nezygar that the publication in the Financial Times was orchestrated and "very painful" for Lavrov, who subsequently reduced his public activity.

"The article contains a lot of falsehoods and sweeping accusations against the minister. But what is true is that Lavrov is indeed tired and he has likely gained more adversaries within the Kremlin," the source said.

"He has evidently lost Putin's favor and appears to be a weak link," Nezygar's sources claimed.

Former Russian diplomat Boris Bondarev dismissed the reports that Lavrov's standing with the Kremlin was diminished, saying that "this is the version that the media loves to seize on and exaggerate."

"While the version has the right to exist, Lavrov said nothing that could have alarmed the Americans," he said, adding that Lavrov has been foreign minister for 21 years and has

worked with Putin smoothly throughout this time.

“The rumors that Lavrov was rude to Rubio, showed unwillingness to negotiate or caused the summit to be canceled are complete nonsense,” Bondarev said in an interview.

Yet he stressed that Putin could have shifted the blame onto Lavrov for the summit’s cancellation, in order to avoid taking responsibility for the failed talks with the United States.

Lavrov, 75, has served as Russia’s foreign minister since 2004 and is also a permanent member of the country’s Security Council.

He has been under personal sanctions from the U.S., the EU, Canada, Australia and other countries since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

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