

‘Constructive & Surprisingly Frank’: Putin Meets Obama on Sidelines of UN General Assembly

By [RT](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

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[Agenda](#)

The leaders of Russia and the United States have held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, shortly after they both addressed the international community on the world's most pressing geopolitical issues.

The meeting between the two leaders lasted for approximately an hour and a half – surpassing the limit of 55 minutes. After the talks, President Putin walked out to meet the press and answer questions about the meeting and the speech he had delivered to UNGA.

“Today’s meeting was very constructive, practical and surprisingly frank,” the Russian President told the press. “We found a lot of common ground, but there are differences as well. In fact they are known, so there is no need to repeat them.”

В.Путин и Б.Обама провели двустороннюю встречу <http://t.co/PnAp14Z5LW>
Vladimir Putin met with [@POTUS](#) [@BarackObama](#) pic.twitter.com/OtE8TynOXY

— МИД России (@MID_RF) [September 28, 2015](#)

While Obama did not talk to the press following the meeting, a US official confirmed to Reuters that the presidents agreed to explore options for a political solution in Syria, with disagreements remaining over the future of President Bashar Assad. Political talks will continue between US and Russian foreign ministers, while the Pentagon would arrange the military-to-military talks, the official added. **[READ MORE: Putin to UN: Export of so-called democratic revolutions continues globally](#)** In his address to the General Assembly, Putin reiterated that Damascus’ government remains a legitimate power in Syria while the national army is the only armed force legally fighting terrorism in Syria. Russia’s president again proposed the joining of efforts and the creation of a broad international coalition against terrorism, which would coordinate its efforts with Damascus. *“We do not rule out anything. But if we do something, we will do it in full accordance with the norms of international law,”* Putin said, answering the question as to whether the Russian military is planning to conduct anti-ISIS airstrikes in Syria. *“We talked about this today: Military jets from Australia, France, the US, are carrying out airstrikes not only in Iraq – where it is justified under international law, since there had been a request from the Iraqi government – in the case of Syrian territory it is illegal, and we spoke about it too.”*

While the participation of the Russian military in a ground operation in Syria is absolutely out of question, Putin said that Moscow is considering other options in supporting those fighting terrorists on the ground in Syria, such as the Kurdish militia and, first of all, the

Syrian national army. The joint information center that was created in Baghdad to coordinate the anti-terrorist efforts of regional powers is one example of such support, Putin noted, adding that this HQ is open for anyone who is interested in the fight against terrorism to join.

Putin: 'I'm not entitled to assess US President. This is up to American people'
<http://t.co/tXDbuBz63R> pic.twitter.com/cG15swOf2A

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Commenting on some Western leaders' adamant position that Assad is a figure to 'deal with' and who must go, Putin once again noted that it is only up to the Syrian people to decide and choose their leader.

"I have great respect for my colleagues - the US President, as well as the French - but they are, as far as I know, are not citizens of the Syrian Republic, and therefore [it is] unlikely [that they] should be involved in determining the fate of another state's management," Putin told the media. However he emphasized that anti-terrorist fighting in Syria must be conducted in accordance with political processes.

Putin admitted that relations between Moscow and Washington are at a rather low level at the moment, but stated that it was not on Russia's initiative that ties with the US had been torn, but was instead the result of its *"American partners' position."*

One of shortest POTUS photos ops ever. Walk in, shake hands, walk out. 13½ seconds. pic.twitter.com/5z2xn3Mdig

— Mark Knoller (@markknoller) [September 28, 2015](#)

Before going behind closed doors the two presidents shook hands in front of the cameras, but refused to answer any questions. Earlier in the day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hosted a state luncheon for the heads of delegations to the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly, with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Barack Obama sitting either side of him. **[READ MORE: Putin to UN: Export of so-called democratic revolutions continues globally](#)** The informal lunch followed the high-profile addresses by the two leaders at the opening of the UNGA debate on Monday. **[READ MORE: Obama to UN: US ready to work with Russia and Iran on Syria](#)** The personal relationship between Putin and Obama has cooled off since Washington introduced sanctions against Moscow last year, accusing it of escalating the crisis in Ukraine.

DEVELOPING: Putin, Obama meet on [#UNGA2015](#) sidelines
<http://t.co/SfvJt3N1ZG> pic.twitter.com/gK8diV4aUy

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One of the last times that the Russian and American leaders met was during the Belfast G8 Summit in June 2013. In September the same year, Obama and Putin also briefly met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Since then, most of their exchanges have taken place over the phone, during which both leaders focused on solving the Ukrainian and Syrian crises.

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