

Putin v. NBC's Kelly: A Poorly Planned Match

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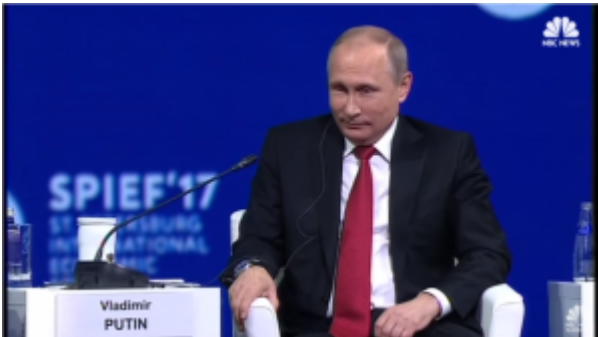
Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

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On Sunday, June 7th, Megyn Kelly's new NBC hour, "Sunday Night with Megyn Kelly," debuted after much advance hoopla about her exclusive interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin. LA Times television critic Lorraine Ali wrote that Putin outmaneuvered her, grimacing and smirking all the way, and that it was "a poorly planned match."

Hell yes. The simple truth is that Kelly asked stupid questions and Putin answered intelligently. How could he not grimace or smirk at Kelly's appeal to the expertise of U.S. spooks and politicians with classified information that none of the rest of us have seen regarding the alleged Russian hacks that allegedly gave the 2016 U.S. presidential election to Donald Trump?

"What the experts say is that this couldn't have been faked, that it's 100 factors that point to Russia, they say it's the forensics, it's the digital fingerprints, it's the IP addresses, the malware, the encryption keys, the specific pieces of code, that all of them, all of them, point to Russia, and none of them points to anyone other than Russia." [Megyn Kelly]



During a key session at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Pres. Putin was asked repeatedly about accusations of Russian meddling in the presidential election. (Screenshot from NBC News video.)

The audience seemed to enjoy Putin's response as much as I did:

"What fingerprints? Or hoof prints? Or horn prints? What are you talking about? IP addresses—they can be invented, you know. There are a lot of specialists who can even make it so it comes from your home IP address, as if your three-year-old daughter carried out the election."

This exchange actually took place at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum,

which began on June 1st and concluded on June 3rd, the day before Putin sat down for the video of his one-on-one interview with Kelly, but NBC editors inexplicably chose to include it in the interview aired Sunday night.

Megyn Kelly had for some reason been invited to moderate at least one panel of the St. Petersburg forum, perhaps because its organizers knew that she would make us—Americans—even more of a laughingstock for allowing our public conversation to be swamped by the ridiculous story that Russians hijacked our election.

In Kelly's ham-fisted narration of the rest of the interview—which lasted all of 11 minutes—she referred to Putin as a “former KGB spymaster,” “Russia's strongman for 17 years now,” “the former KGB agent,” etc.

The most successful propaganda ever convinces us that “Western interests” or “U.S. interests” coincide with ours, but “Kremlingate” now rivals the Tonkin Gulf Incident and weapons of mass destruction. If it trips off a nuclear war, it'll win the prize, even if none of us ordinary folks without nuclear bomb shelters survive to award it.

Putin on defending the Syrian state

Vladimir Putin and Megyn Kelly had a far more interesting exchange about Syria and sarin gas at the St. Petersburg forum. NBC did not include this in the 11 minutes that aired Sunday, but RT America filmed and posted it to YouTube. In this one, Kelly echoed former UN Ambassador Samantha Power, NPR commentator Scott Simon, and other American politicians and pundits who have characterized Bashar-al-Assad as “evil.” She noted that even his alleged co-conspirator Donald Trump called Assad an “evil guy,” as he did after the alleged chemical weapons attack by the Syrian army.

“Our president has said that you're backing an evil guy there. He said Assad is an evil guy. Do you believe that?”

Putin dismissed the silly question about “evil” with a comic response, then responded that Russia is not defending Assad; it is defending the Syrian state from the fate of Libya, Somalia, and Afghanistan.

“It is not Assad whom we are protecting there. We are protecting the Syrian statehood. We don't want their interior to be a situation similar to that in Libya, or in Somalia or in Afghanistan, and in Afghanistan, your army has been present for many years, but the situation is not changing for the better. We want to preserve the Syrian statehood. And on the basis of resolving this fundamental issue, we would like them to move towards settling the Syrian issue through political means. Yes, probably everyone that's there is to blame for something, but let's not forget that were it not for an active interference from outside, the civil war would probably not have broken out.”

Kelly refused to entertain the idea that preserving the secular Syrian state might help to stabilize the region, or that its collapse would destabilize the region.

Putin also said the same thing that Theodore Postol, MIT Professor Emeritus of Science, Technology and National Security, has said— that there is absolutely no evidence that the

Syrian army committed the August 4th chemical weapons attack.

“What has President Assad been accused of recently? We know he’s accused about using chemical weapons, but there’s no evidence to support that whatsoever. Right after the incident, we suggested that an inspection should be carried out at the air base from which allegedly the aircraft of President Assad had taken off carrying chemical weapons. If the chemical weapons had been used, then those weapons would have been loaded onto the aircraft, and the cutting edge analyzing equipment would have detected that. But they refused to conduct this kind of inspection, so they are talking a lot, but not doing much.

“We suggested that an inspection should be carried out at the place where the strike took place. They [the Americans] are saying it’s too dangerous. Why is it dangerous if the strike was against the good part of the opposition [according to the Americans]? No, they say, it’s too dangerous.

“There is a representatives of Iraq here, whom we welcome, and Iraqi Kurdistan. The militants used chemical weapons [against Iraqi and Kurdish troops] and the world community recognized it, [as confirmed by Newsweek]. So we know that the militants have chemical weapons, but the OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] tells us that Syria has destroyed its stocks of chemical weapons.”

Kelly said that we know Assad has used chemical weapons before, and that Russia had acknowledged that in 2013, so the only question is whether or not Assad used chemical weapons on April 4th this year. She then asked whether we weren’t compelled to believe the video evidence of the suffering, dying children.

Putin responded first by asking her to please be precise. Russia, he said, had acknowledged that Assad had chemical weapons, but not that he had used them in 2013. After that, he and President Obama had joined the agreement to dispose of them. Why, again, he asked, had there been no expert inspection after this year’s April 4th chemical weapons attack?

Kelly asked whether we were to believe that this had all been a conspiracy, involving even the World Health Institute and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, who had been involved in the autopsies of the bodies of the victims at Turkey’s Forensic Medicine Institution.

“Are we really to believe that the whole thing was staged, that everybody was in on it? The World Health Organization? The Forensic Medicine Institution? The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons?”

Putin accused Kelly of pretending not to understand the obvious—that the autopsies proved nothing about who had actually used sarin gas.

“The answer is very simple and you know it. Yes, sarin could have been used by someone, but not by Assad. It could have been used by someone in order to accuse President Assad. So we have to understand who is to blame and otherwise, if there is no true investigation, it’s only going to play into the hands of those who orchestrated it.

“I’d like to ask you a question, why didn’t everyone go right away to inspect

the air base, to the spot where chemical weapons allegedly had been used? Why didn't they want to go to see the aircraft that had been allegedly used to perform this strike? The answer is very simple. Because they were afraid that everything, the truth, would come to light.

"What you are telling me doesn't convince me of anything. It just persuades me that we'd better not engage in a tug of war there or speculate. We've got to pull our efforts together to counter real threats, and we know what these real threats are.

"The U.S. has very far—yes, there was an explosion there, people suffered, for which we offer our condolences. But we also know what terrorism is all about. We have seen its manifestations, and no one should try to use terrorists to address short term political interests, and there are attempts at that. Yes, there are attempts at using terrorists against—say, Assad.

"Why use them? Because no one else would fight. I do not think it's worthwhile using these terrorists today, because tomorrow it's going to cost you a lot. When Al-Qaeda was created in Afghanistan to fight against the Soviet Union, they [U.S. policymakers] didn't know that it would strike the U.S. on 9/11. We've got to think about negative ramifications in the long term."

Using terrorists? Really? Vladimir Putin said that the U.S. is using terrorists against Assad and that the same terrorists are likely to bite back.

Shouldn't Megyn Kelly challenge that? RT cut the video they posted to YouTube at the end of Putin's statement, but NBC no doubt had video of the entire event, though they used only one short clip.

Don't most American who watch NBC imagine that the U.S. is fighting terrorists in Syria? Shouldn't they know that Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. of instead "using terrorists" against Bashar-al-Assad? Wouldn't they want to hear Megyn Kelly respond to that? Or ignore it? But damn if that video wasn't left in the trash on NBC's hard drive.

Featured image: NBC News

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