

US Rejects Putin's Offer of Transcript of Trump-Lavrov Meeting

US rejects and ridicules unprecedented Russian offer though it offers the one opportunity of ascertaining beyond all doubt what actually happened at the meeting between Trump and Lavrov. 12Share on FacebookTwitter

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Global Research, May 19, 2017

[The Duran](#) 18 May 2017

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The US political and media establishment has rejected and even ridiculed President Putin's offer to Congress of the transcripts of the meeting in the Oval Office between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US President Donald Trump.

The prevailing response to the offer is that it was not intended seriously. The tone was set by BBC journalist who speaking on British television claimed that in making the offer Putin was having, and was just trolling the US, and that there is "no possibility" of the US accepting a transcript written on "Kremlin notepaper".

This is to misrepresent what was a perfectly serious offer despite the humorous tone with which Putin spoke.

That the offer was intended entirely seriously can be judged by the [words](#) Putin used when he made the offer

As for the results of Foreign Minister Lavrov's visit to the United States and his meeting with President Trump, we assess the results highly. This was the first visit, a return visit by our foreign minister, after we received US Secretary of State Tillerson here in Moscow.

This is normal and natural international practice. At the same time, however, we see the growing political schizophrenia in the United States. There is no other way I can explain the accusations against the current president that he handed whichever secrets over to Lavrov.

Incidentally, I spoke with him [Lavrov] today about this matter, and I will have to give him a ticking off for not sharing these secrets with me. Not with me, nor with our intelligence officials. This was really not good of him at all.

What's more, if the US administration has no objection, we are ready to provide a transcript of Lavrov's conversation with Trump to the US Senate and Congress. Of course, we would do this only if the American administration so desires.

Initially, when we watched the first developments in this internal political struggle, we were amused. But now, the spectacle is becoming quite simply sad, and it is causing us concern, because it is hard to imagine just how far people willing to think up this kind of nonsense and absurdity might go. All

of this is ultimately about fanning anti-Russian sentiment.

This does not surprise me. They are using anti-Russian slogans to destabilize the internal political situation in the United States, but they do not realise that they are harming their own country. If this is the case, then they are quite simply stupid. If they do understand what they are doing, then they are dangerous and unscrupulous people. In any event, this is the United States' own affair and we have no intention of getting involved.

As for assessments of President Trump's actions so far in office, this too is not our affair. It is for the American people, American voters, to give their assessment. Of course, this will be possible only once he is fully allowed to work.

An important point about Putin - and one which I have made previously, and which was very obvious to me on the two occasions when I have seen him in person (at the two SPIEF conferences which I have attended in St. Petersburg in 2014 and 2016) - is that he is one of those people who use humour to hide their anger.

It does not follow from this that when Putin makes jokes it always and invariably means that he is angry. However it sometimes does, so that when he laughs and makes jokes in a certain way it can be interpreted - and is interpreted by those around him - as a warning sign. The words I have highlighted show that this was one such case.

What these words show is that far from "enjoying" the US political crisis - as the BBC journalist crassly imagines - Putin is furious that relations with Russia are being used as a weapon in an internal US political conflict which he characterises - correctly - as a power struggle. He is also aghast at the ruthlessness and cynicism of the people who are doing it, whom he characterises as "dangerous and unscrupulous" (he obviously doesn't think they are "stupid"). He also judges them completely irresponsible, saying - also correctly - that they are destabilising the political situation in their own country.

As for the offer of the transcript, there is no doubt this was seriously intended.

To repeat [my explanation from before](#), at any high level diplomatic meeting senior officials are accompanied by interpreters whose job is not just to translate what is said but also to make a verbatim written record of what is said.

Both the US and Russians would have had such people present at the meeting between Trump and Lavrov, and both sets of these people would have made a verbatim record of what was said during the meeting.



These records – scribbled by the interpreters in shorthand – are then written up into a proper transcript and are if necessary circulated to other senior officials and throughout the bureaucracy. They then become an essential part of the diplomatic archive of whichever country the officials taking part in the meeting belong to.

It is through consulting such transcripts when archives are opened that diplomatic historians can reconstruct the course of negotiations when they write their diplomatic histories. In the meantime it is a fundamental rule of international diplomacy that until that happens – usually many decades later – records like these are kept confidential, and are not released without the agreement of both sides taking part in the discussions.

What Putin was offering – as his words clearly show – was an agreement with the US whereby the Russians would provide the US Congress with their transcript. The US would obviously be in a position to check its accuracy against its own, or in the alternative it could also provide the Congress with its own.

Far from being intended as a joke, this is a highly unusual and almost unprecedented offer, the making of which shows how seriously Putin and the Russians are taking the situation.

Of course the offer was refused even though it is the best and simplest way of finding out what actually happened at the meeting between Trump and Lavrov in the Oval Office.

This of course shows the real agenda of those who have been spreading stories about the meeting. They are not really interested in finding out what actually happened at the meeting.

They have now had clearcut denials of the original Washington Post story from almost everyone who was present or was involved, not just from Putin and Lavrov, but also from Trump, McMaster, Tillerson, and Dina Powell. McMaster has toured the television stories repeatedly calling out the Washington Post story as “false”.

Yet in spite of these denials from the most senior officials of the US and Russian governments, they continue to believe – or pretend to believe – the anonymous sources which were behind the Washington Post article, who almost certainly were not there.

They have also rejected – and misrepresented and ridiculed – a serious and unprecedented offer from the Russian government which would once and for all settle the truth of the matter.

Putin called these people “dangerous and unscrupulous”. Their response to his offer shows he is right.

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