



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

September 5, 2024

Case No. FL-2024-00046

William F. Marshall
Judicial Watch, Inc.
425 Third Street, SW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Marshall:

As we noted in our letter dated June 20, 2024, we are processing your request for material under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552. The Department of State (“Department”) has identified an additional 16 responsive records subject to the FOIA. Upon review, we have determined all 16 records may be released in part.

An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made redactions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each record. Where applicable, the Department has considered the foreseeable harm standard when reviewing these records and applying FOIA exemptions. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released and is enclosed.

This concludes the processing of your request. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact John J. "Jack" Bardo, Assistant United States Attorney, at john.bardo@usdoj.gov or (202) 870-6770. Please refer to the case number, FL-2024-00046, and the civil action number, 24-cv-00840, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diamonece Hickson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "H".

Diamonece Hickson
Chief, Litigation and Appeals Branch
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

(b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:

- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
- 1.4(b) Foreign government information
- 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
- 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
- 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
- 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
- 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction

(b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency

(b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:

ARMSEXP	Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)
CIA PERS/ORG	Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
EXPORT CONTROL	Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c)
FS ACT	Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f)
IRAN	Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505

(b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information

(b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product

(b)(6) Personal privacy information

(b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:

- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
- (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
- (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (D) disclose confidential sources
- (E) disclose investigation techniques
- (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual

(b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions

(b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Mon, 12 Feb 2024 12:08:23 +0000
To: Kim, Yuri; EUR-StaffAssistants;(b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) EUR-Press
Subject: RE: YK clear: Q&As for A/S Interview with WaPo, PBS
Attachments: Memory Joggers - WaPo, PBS, NYT Interview AS O'Brien- 12 FEB 24.docx, Questions - WaPo, PBS, NYT Interview AS O'Brien - 12 FEB 24.docx

Dear PDAS Kim and staffers,

Thank you very much for the edits. Staff assistants, see attached for the updated paper to include lines on Tucker Carlson's interview of Putin.

Best,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Press Officer | EUR Press and Public Diplomacy
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs | HST Building, Room 4515
Portfolio: NBA, PRA, T Issues, SRUER, ShareAmerica
Contractor: Great Hill Solutions
Shared inbox: EUR-Press@state.gov

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: Kim, Yuri (b)(6)@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, February 11, 2024 2:24 PM
To: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: FW: YK clear: Q&As for A/S Interview with WaPo, PBS

Clear, with edits. One more Q: What do you make of Tucker Carlson's interview of Putin?

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 6:28 PM
To: Kim, Yuri (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>; (b)(6)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: YK clear: Q&As for A/S Interview with WaPo, PBS

Good evening, PDAS Kim,

Attached please find, for your review and approval, paper Press prepared for A/S O'Brien's interview on Monday with the Post, NYT, and PBS.

Looping in (b)(6) and (b)(6) should you have any questions.

Best,

(b)(6)

Staff Assistant | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

U.S. Department of State | HST Building, Room 6223A

(b)(6) | EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov

EUR/FO Guidance, Templates, and Paper Tracker

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From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 6:19 PM

To: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>;

Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.gov>; Smith, Christopher W (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>

Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: RE: (b)(6) Coulter/Smith/(b)(6) Q&As for A/S Interview with WaPo, PBS

I clear.

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From: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>**Sent:** Friday, February 9, 2024 1:43 PM**To:** (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)@state.gov; Coulter, Sonata N

(b)(6)@state.gov; Smith, Christopher W (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)@state.gov

Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov; EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-

StaffAssistants@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)@state.gov; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov

Subject: (b)(6) Coulter/Smith (b)(6) clear: Q&As for A/S Interview with WaPo, PBS

Colleagues - please clear linked below Q&As for A/S O'Brien's interview with Washington Post and PBS NewHour.

[Memory Joggers - WaPo, PBS Interview AS O'Brien- 12 FEB 24.docx](#)

Thank you,

(b)(6)

Staff Assistant | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

U.S. Department of State | HST Building, Room 6223A

(b)(6) | EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov

[EUR/FO Guidance, Templates, and Paper Tracker](#)

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From: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>**Sent:** Friday, February 9, 2024 12:51 PM**To:** EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Cc: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>

Subject: RE: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

Hi Staffers,

Please see the memory joggers (including reporter bios) and questions attached. The questions/topics document is more of a cheat sheet for the memory joggers, which contain the answers. Apologies this is a bit late – thank you for your flexibility!

Best,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Press Officer | EUR Press and Public Diplomacy

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs | HST Building, Room 4515

Portfolio: NBA, PRA, T Issues, SRUER, ShareAmerica

Contractor: Great Hill Solutions

Shared inbox: EUR-Press@state.gov

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>

Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 11:51 AM

To: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>

Cc: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>

Subject: Re: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

Apologies for getting our wires crossed double-tasking that one. We'll take it whenever it's ready!

Staff Assistant | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

U.S. Department of State | HST Building, Room 6223A

(b)(6) EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov

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From: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 11:47 AM
To: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Cc: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>
Subject: RE: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

And sorry – yesterday we were told we had a noon deadline, which is why I didn't plan to have it sooner!

(b)(6)

Press Officer | EUR Press and Public Diplomacy
U.S. Department of State
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Portfolio: NBA, PRA, T Issues, SRUER, ShareAmerica
Contractor: Great Hill Solutions
Shared inbox: EUR-Press@state.gov

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

From: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 11:47 AM
To: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Cc: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>
Subject: RE: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

Hi (b)(6)

Hoping to have it to you shortly – aiming for 12:30.

Thanks,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Press Officer | EUR Press and Public Diplomacy
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs | HST Building, Room 4515
Portfolio: NBA, PRA, T Issues, SRUER, ShareAmerica
Contractor: Great Hill Solutions
Shared inbox: EUR-Press@state.gov

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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From: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 11:07 AM
To: EUR-Press <EUR-Press@state.gov>
Cc: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

Press colleagues,

I wanted to check in to see if you have an ETA for the Q&As and bios for the Monday gathering with WashPo, PBS, and FT journalists.

Best,

(b)(6)

Staff Assistant | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

U.S. Department of State | HST Building, Room 6223A

(b)(6) EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov

[EUR/FO Guidance, Templates, and Paper Tracker](#)

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From: EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 7:47 AM
To: EUR-Deskofficers-DL <EUR-Deskofficers-DL@state.gov>; EUR-Directors-DL <EUR-Directors-DL@state.gov>; EUR-Deputy Directors-DL <EURDeputy-Directors@state.gov>; EUR-OMS-DL <EUR-OMS-DL@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6) <[\(b\)\(6\)@state.gov](mailto:(b)(6)@state.gov)>; (b)(6) <[\(b\)\(6\)@state.gov](mailto:(b)(6)@state.gov)>; (b)(6) <[\(b\)\(6\)@state.gov](mailto:(b)(6)@state.gov)>; EUR-StaffAssistants <EUR-StaffAssistants@state.gov>
Subject: EUR Paper Due: 02/09

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Good morning EUR colleagues,

The following paper is due to the EUR/FO.

Non Responsive

Withheld pursuant to exemption

Non Responsive

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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UNCLASSIFIED

**(U) Assistant Secretary James C. O'Brien's
Background Interview with Michael Birnbaum (Washington Post),
Nick Schifrin (PBS NewsHour), and Eric Schmitt (New York Times)
Monday, February 12, 2024, 12:10 p.m. (30 minutes)**

Non Responsive

UNCLASSIFIED

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Withheld pursuant to exemption

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UNCLASSIFIED

Non Responsive

10. (U) Tucker Carlson interview of Putin?

(b)(5)

Non Responsive

UNCLASSIFIED

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Withheld pursuant to exemption

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UNCLASSIFIED

Non Responsive

UNCLASSIFIED

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Withheld pursuant to exemption

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Non Responsive

UNCLASSIFIED

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UNCLASSIFIED

Approved: EUR – Yuri Kim, PDAS [YK]

Drafted: EUR/Press – (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Cleared:

EUR/FO: Sonata Coulter (ok)

EUR/FO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/FO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/FO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/FO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/FO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/PPD: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/Press: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/EE: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/RUS: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/SCE: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/CARC: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/RPM/NATO: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/RPM/OSCE: info

EUR/ERA: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/ERA: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/ACE: info

EUR/WE: (b)(6) (ok)

Emb Kyiv: info

EB/TFS/SPI: (b)(6) (ok)

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Reporters' Questions/Discussion Topics

Russia/Ukraine

Non Responsive

10. Comment on Tucker Carlson's interview of Putin?

Non Responsive

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From: Pyatt, Geoffrey R
Sent: Tue, 20 Feb 2024 15:14:00 +0000
To: Brink, Bridget A (Kyiv); Smith, Christopher W
Subject: RE: Dispatch from Munich: The lessons of appeasement

Non Responsive

~~SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: Frederick Kempe (b)(6) >
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 7:01 AM
Subject: Dispatch from Munich: The lessons of appeasement



Dispatch from Munich: The lessons of appeasement for US lawmakers withholding support for Ukraine



By Fred Kempe, Atlantic Council president and CEO

MUNICH—The stench of appeasement hung over the Munich Security Conference this past weekend, leaving more than a few European leaders making comparisons to September 1938. That was when a very different Munich meeting placated a murderous dictator—with disastrous consequences.

It was then that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, meeting with Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and their French Republican and Italian fascist counterparts, signed off on the Third Reich's annexation of the Western part of Czechoslovakia (which the Germans called Sudetenland), naively hoping that would allow them to avoid a larger European war.

With the two-year mark of Russian dictator Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine coming up this week—and with his ongoing war and occupation of

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sovereign Ukrainian territory—it's worth reflecting on the dynamics behind the 1938 Munich Agreement and Chamberlain's subsequent "Peace for Our Time" speech, as they may hold lessons for US lawmakers in the House of Representatives who continue to balk at approving urgently needed support for Ukraine after four months of dithering in Congress.

Hitler had threatened to unleash a European war unless the leaders of Britain, France, and Italy agreed to German annexation of the Sudetenland, a border region with an ethnic German majority. "My good friends," Chamberlain said in a statement in front of 10 Downing Street, "for the second time in our history, a British prime minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honor. I believe it is a peace for our time . . . Go home and get a nice quiet sleep."

Echoes of history

There are plenty of differences between then and now, but one shouldn't overlook the striking similarities.

First, Hitler had annexed German-speaking Austria in March 1938, and he was determined to swallow up the German-speaking Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia next. Today, Putin has already occupied and annexed portions of Ukraine with sizable numbers of Russian speakers—areas that he considers to be his property: Crimea, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, and Donetsk.

Hitler wrote at length about his warped historic, genetic, and anti-Semitic notions in *Mein Kampf*, providing a copy of his national best-seller to every young marrying couple in Third Reich Germany. By comparison, Putin most recently shared his own twisted justifications for denying Ukrainian statehood, dating back to the ninth century, with American media personality Tucker Carlson—not such a bizarre vehicle if one considers Carlson's influence on a Republican minority in the House that is currently standing in the way of approving additional aid for Ukraine.

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And just as in 1938, when the focus of debate was on the future of Czechoslovakia and when commentaries praised the country's bravery and resilience, so too now is the focus on Ukraine. Back then, the more appropriate focus should have been on the dictator responsible for the threat and on how to stop him. Today, the more appropriate focus is no different.

One more similarity between 1938 and today is the gradual alignment of authoritarian powers. Shortly after Chamberlain's infamous Munich Agreement, a fascist-nationalist German-Italian-Japanese axis of nations emerged. Today, European and US leaders alike have observed an increasingly close alignment among Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and North Korean authoritarian leaders.

A morose Munich

The Munich Security Conference this week, which marked the convening's sixtieth anniversary, is as good a measure of the transatlantic *zeitgeist* as any.

Yet four news events that unfolded outside of Munich soured the mood: Former US President Donald Trump's campaign trail statement that he would let Russians "do whatever the hell they want" to NATO allies not paying enough for defense; the death in prison of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny; the biggest Russian battlefield victory in months in the Ukrainian city of Avdiivka; and leaked reports of Moscow's plans to develop a nuclear space weapon, which the Atlantic Council's John Cookson suggested could be a "Sputnuk" moment.

On Trump's statement, a range of Republican supporters of Trump in Munich were at pains to explain why their presidential candidate should be taken seriously but not literally, as US military support for Ukraine, Poland, and NATO increased during his administration. Their argument that Trump simply wants Europeans to carry more of their own defense still left allies worried that they are in for a long period of US unpredictability.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Regarding Navalny, his wife Yulia (who was in Munich to speak on his behalf) provided a courageous first response to reports of his death, accusing Putin of killing him and vowing that the Russian dictator would pay for it. Some long-time Munich conference participants, who heard Putin's initial declaration of war on the West there in 2007, speculated that he might well have timed Navalny's death with the Munich gathering to send an unmistakable message of the West's powerlessness to stop such outrages.

"It sounds like Putin might have done it for our benefit," said Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski. "I'm not prone to conspiracy theory, but I understand conspiracy practice."

It is impossible not to link Russian advances in Ukraine with the long delay in US congressional support for new weapons deliveries, as the outgunned and outmanned Ukrainians struggle to hold the line against Russian forces commanded by Putin, who is willing to suffer outsized casualties. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that in the battle for Avdiivka, Russia's losses were seven times those of Ukraine.

If "Ukraine is left alone, Russia will destroy us," Zelenskyy told the Munich conference. "If we don't act now, Putin will succeed in turning the next few years into a catastrophe —not only for Ukraine but for others as well."

On "Sputnuker," the consensus in Munich was a resigned European shrug as Russia marches on, develops asymmetric advanced weaponry that could take down European communications in space, and shifts to a war footing that Europe's democracies will never match.

Writing for the *Washington Post*, David Ignatius pointed out Russia's motivation for developing such weaponry: "Ironically, it's the Ukraine conflict—and the role of

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space systems in helping Kyiv survive the initial Russian onslaught in 2022—that likely triggered Russia to rush development of its new space tactics.”

Four causes for concern

The concerns and fears at Munich this year, which far overwhelmed rare voices of optimism, broke down into four mutually reinforcing categories.

The first fear was about Russia’s resilience and Putin’s increasing confidence, which contributed to a growing conviction that Russia will remain a problem for the West for some years to come.

The second concern stemmed from the possibility that Ukraine might lose the war, with a growing danger that it could be overwhelmed by Russian military mass, and from an assessment of the repercussions of that scenario most immediately for other former Soviet bloc states, from Poland to the Baltics, but also globally, from the United States to the Middle East and Asia.

The third concern, one that pervaded almost every conversation at the conference this weekend, was about the potential for a reduced US commitment not only to Ukraine but also to the nearly eighty-year-old transatlantic bond, particularly should Trump be elected in November.

The fourth fear, closely connected to the third, was that Europe still lacks the military industrial capacity and the political will to defend itself, let alone defend Ukraine. Though Europe is ramping up its defense industrial production and increasing its spending, it would take years for European countries to replace US capacity, if they ever could.

The past three Munich Security Conferences have all focused on Ukraine, and each year the conventional wisdom has missed the mark. One can only hope that is true again.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

In 2022, there were growing concerns that Putin would invade Ukraine, which did happen, but there was also a consensus that Ukraine would be overrun within days by such a military offensive. In 2023, the mood was more positive, with many voices believing that Ukraine's remarkable performance in the previous year could lead to a stunning counteroffensive that would help Kyiv regain territory occupied by Russia.

The collective view is that 2024 will be a moment of truth in Ukraine. Without US congressional approval for additional support soon, the thinking goes, the odds are that Russia will continue to make gains and that some could be dramatic by the time of the seventy-fifth NATO Summit in July in Washington, DC—just ahead of US elections.

It is worth remembering the calls of "shame" from the House of Commons galleries, as Chamberlain defended his Munich arrangements in 1938. "I have nothing to be ashamed of," he answered back. "Let those who have hang their heads."

Not too late—yet

It's worth reading what Chamberlain said after returning from Munich as a warning to all who are tempted to sell Ukraine short, underestimate Putin and other emerging despots, and retreat into the most dangerous of all responses: naive complacency.

"The path which leads to appeasement is long and bristles with obstacles," said Chamberlain. "The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous. Now that we have got past it, I feel it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity."

There is an oft-repeated quote that says "insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

It's not too late for the US House of Representatives to change course, to bring a vote on a Senate bill providing Ukraine aid to the floor, and to provide Ukraine the support it urgently needs to do the free world's bidding against Putin. Should this fail, Europe would need to greatly accelerate its ramp-up of defense production and its support for Ukraine.

The lesson of Munich, then and now, is that the cost of countering a despot will only grow the longer democracies wait to do so. As Sikorski said in Munich, "I have more doubts about us than the Ukrainians." If the United States fails to step up to the moment this year, he said, "it could affect the national-security calculations of every country on Earth. We are at a dramatic moment, one of terrible foreboding."



Fred Kempe
President and CEO
Atlantic Council

Research contributions by Kelsey Wagner

Subscribe to Inflection Points

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

The week's top reads

#1 Why Russia Killed Navalny

Anne Applebaum | THE ATLANTIC

In this powerful reflection on Alexei Navalny's life, Anne Applebaum argues that the specific details of his death "don't matter," whether he was murdered or died from months of ill health, because "the Russian state killed him," she writes. "Putin killed him—because of his political success, because of his ability to reach people with the truth, and because of his talent for breaking through the fog of propaganda that now blinds his countrymen, and some of ours as well."

Despite Navalny's death, Applebaum remains optimistic. "Even behind bars Navalny was a real threat to Putin because he was living proof that courage is possible, that truth exists, that Russia could be a different kind of country," she writes. "For a dictator who survives thanks to lies and violence, that kind of challenge was intolerable. Now Putin will be forced to fight against Navalny's memory, and that is a battle he will never win." [**Read More** →](#)

#2 Opinion: Is This a Sputnik Moment?

Kari A. Bingen and Heather W. Williams | NEW YORK TIMES

In this compelling analysis, Kari Bingen and Heather Williams evaluate the parallels between Thursday's announcement of a new Russian antisatellite capability,

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

suspected of being a space-based nuclear weapon, and the 1957 launch of Soviet satellite Sputnik.

“If it is what the White House suggests, we may now find ourselves facing this generation’s Sputnik moment,” they write. “In 1957, when the former Soviet Union launched the world’s first satellite and shocked Americans, the Eisenhower administration had known about the Soviets’ satellite capabilities for almost two years. Now that we know what Russia is planning, the United States cannot afford to be slow to act.” [Read More →](#)

#3 ‘The war has become the background of life’—Andrey Kurkov on Ukraine two years on

Andrey Kurkov | FINANCIAL TIMES

Writing in the *Financial Times*, Ukrainian novelist Andrey Kurkov presents a striking portrait of Ukrainian life as Russia’s war continues.

“Ukrainians may be responding to journalists less optimistically than they did a year ago, but there is no pessimism either,” Kurkov writes. “The time has come for realism—an understanding that this war will last for a long time, that we must learn to live with it. The effort to keep on ‘keeping on’ that has been a form of resistance for civilians since the all-out invasion now requires a little more energy. For those Ukrainians who are not at the front, the war has become the background of life, and the daily air raid alerts are noted alongside the weather forecast.”

Kurkov’s piece also serves as a warning that if Western support does not come through, life in Ukraine may stop altogether. [Read More →](#)

#4 The Arsenal of Autocracy

Jonathan Corrado and Markus Garlauskas | FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Read every word of this smart analysis by the Korea Society's Jonathan Corrado and the Atlantic Council's Markus Garlauskas on why North Korea continues to be a massive threat to the United States and global security, especially in moments of global upheaval.

"As wars rage in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, Pyongyang has seized its opportunity to spread death and destruction through arms sales," Corrado and Garlauskas write. "Although the Kim regime has been systematically isolated from the international community, regularly denies that it is supplying weapons overseas, and is prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions from buying or selling various arms, it has nonetheless become a de facto arsenal for the United States' adversaries."

To stop this trade, they argue, "the United States must mobilize a coalition to increase international awareness of the scale of the problem, and strengthen detection, oversight, and sanctions compliance. If these steps are not taken, then North Korea will be able to finance further weapons testing and development, gain access to dangerous new technologies, launder its ill-gotten profits, and spread mayhem and destruction." **Read More** →

#5 Remarks by President Biden on the Reported Death of Aleksey Navalny

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Joe Biden | THE WHITE HOUSE

Speaking shortly after reports of Alexei Navalny's death, US President Joe Biden linked the brutality Navalny faced to Russia's continued assault on Ukraine and the United States' continuing failure to provide urgently needed military and financial support.


"What has happened to Navalny is yet more proof of Putin's brutality," Biden said. "No one should be fooled—not in Russia, not at home, not anywhere in the world. Putin does not only target [the] citizens of other countries, as we've seen what's going on in Ukraine right now, he also inflicts terrible crimes on his own people."

Biden addressed US responsibility to continue Navalny's fight: "This tragedy reminds us of the stakes of this moment. We have to provide the funding so Ukraine can keep defending itself against Putin's vicious onslaughts and war crimes." [Read More →](#)


Highlights from the Atlantic Council

- [Navalny's life and death show Putinism isn't inevitable](#)
- [Youth unemployment in China: New metric, same mess](#)
- [Can Ukraine's new army chief overcome mounting battlefield challenges?](#)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.



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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Thu, 8 Feb 2024 12:58:10 +0000
To: Coulter, Sonata N
Subject: Morning notes

Non Responsive

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From: USEU PA Press Clips <USEUPAPRESSCLIPS@state.gov>

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2024 2:27 AM

Subject: USEU Newswire Highlights, February 8, 2024



United States Mission
to the European Union

<http://useu.usmission.gov> Brussels, Belgium

**USEU Newswire Highlights
February 8, 2024**

Russia/Ukraine

Non Responsive

Tucker Carlson faces media fury over Putin interview

Non Responsive

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Non Responsive

Tucker Carlson faces media fury over Putin interview

Politico.eu (February 7) - Tucker Carlson is interviewing Russian President Vladimir Putin. The reaction has been apoplectic. Carlson, a conservative pundit and former Fox News anchor who has repeatedly questioned support for Ukraine's war effort, announced Tuesday night his plans to sit down with the Russian president during his trip to Moscow. In a video that racked up more than 60 million views by Wednesday morning, Carlson said he was interviewing Putin "because it's our job. We're in journalism. Our duty is to inform people." But Carlson's monologue, in which he lambasted Western media and claimed it wasn't making an effort to hear Putin's side of the story, has sparked backlash from American and Russian journalists. "Many journalists have interviewed Putin, who also makes frequent, widely covered speeches," wrote Anne Applebaum, an American journalist and historian, on X (formerly Twitter). "Carlson's interview is different because he is not a journalist, he's a propagandist, with a history of helping autocrats conceal corruption." [Link](#).

Withheld pursuant to exemption

Non Responsive

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: EUR-Press
Sent: Tue, 13 Feb 2024 17:35:39 +0000
To: Coulter, Sonata N; Smith, Christopher W
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: Bullpen Briefing Papers for Sonata and Chris: Memory Joggers and R/U Omni
Attachments: RUSSIA-UKRAINE - Omni - 13 FEB 24.docx, EUR - Memory Joggers for Bullpen Briefing for 2-Year - 14 FEB 24.docx

Dear DAS Coulter and DAS Smith,

Please find attached the memory joggers and the R/U omni for the bullpen briefing tomorrow. Let me know if you clear on these papers or if I need to make any edits. Thank you!

Kind regards,

(b)(6)

Senior Press Officer for Ukraine/Russia | Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
U.S. Department of State | HST Building, Room 4515
EUR-Press@state.gov

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

UNCLASSIFIED

**EUR Press Guidance
February 13, 2024**

Russia-Ukraine Omnibus

BREAKING NEWS/DIPLOMACY/STATUS ON THE GROUND3

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Any further comment on the Tucker Carlson interview?5

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-5-

Non Responsive

Any further comment on the Tucker Carlson interview?

- (b)(5)
-
-
-

(b)(5)

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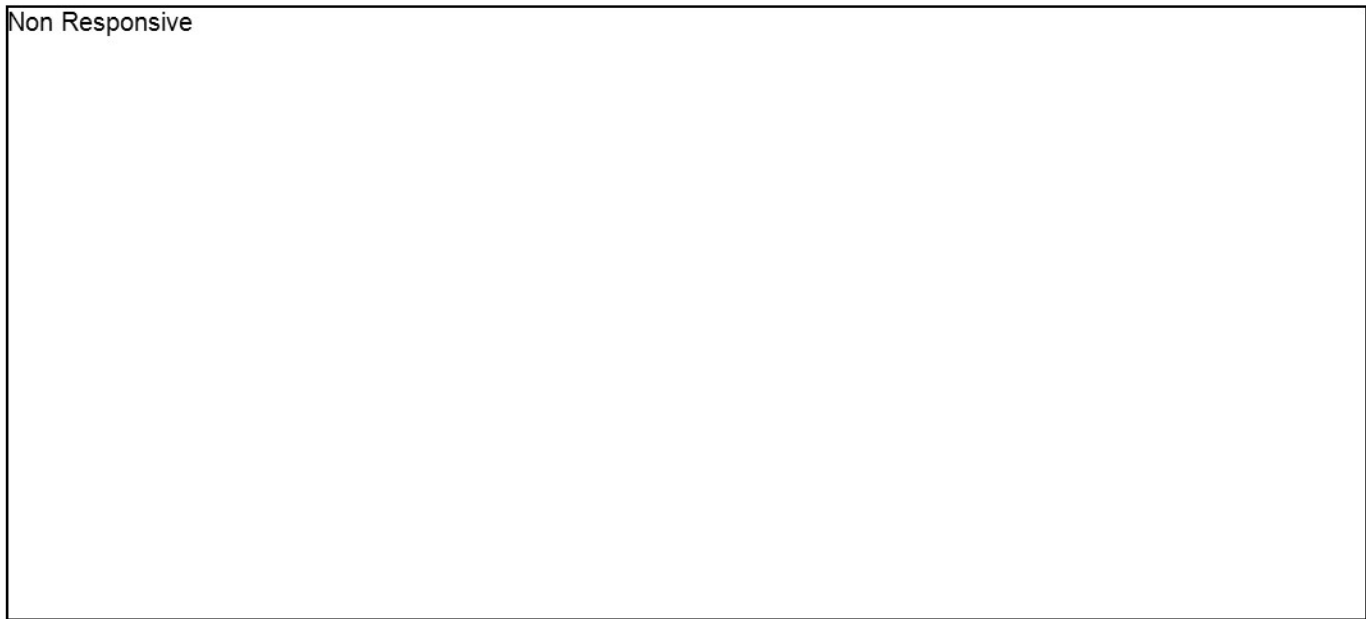
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-6-

(b)(5)



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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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-18-

02/13 Clearances:

CA/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
IO/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
USUN/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
PM/CPA: (b)(6) (ok)
EUR/RPM/OSCE: (b)(6) (ok)
EUR/RPM/NATO: (b)(6) (ok)
DRL/MLGA/IFBHR: (b)(6) (ok)
DRL/FO Senior Advisor: (b)(6) (ok)
DRL/SHR: (b)(6) (ok)
DRL/EUR: (b)(6) (ok)
DRL/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
DSS/PA: (b)(6) (ok)
F/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
AF/Press: (b)(6) (ok)
PRM/EUR: (b)(6) (ok)
PRM/PCA: (b)(6) (ok)
CSO/PPP/PA: (b)(6) (ok)
L/EUR: (b)(6) (ok)
EUR/RUS: (b)(6) (ok)
EUR/ERA: (b)(6) (ok)
EUR/EE: (b)(6) (ok)
D: (b)(6) (ok)
P: (b)(6) (ok)
R: (b)(6) (ok)
S/P: (b)(6) (info)
C: (b)(6) (info)
SPOX: M Miller (ok)

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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**(U) Deputy Assistant Secretaries Sonata Coulter and Christopher Smith's
Bullpen Briefing
Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 9:30 a.m. (30 minutes)**

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Non Responsive

PARTICIPANTS

United States

DAS Sonata Coulter

DAS Christopher Smith

(b)(6) GPA/MD/PRS

(b)(6) EUR/Press

Journalists

Associated Press – Matt Lee

Agence France-Presse – Shaun Tandon, Leon Bruneau

Reuters – Simon Lewis, Humeyra Pamuk, Daphne Psaledakis

Bloomberg – Iain Marlow, Courtney McBride

CNN – Kylie Atwood, Jenny Hansler

ABC – Shannon Crawford

NBC – Abigail Williams, Julia Jester

FOX – Nick Kalman

PBS Newshour – Nick Schifrin

NPR – Michele Kelemen

Washington Post – John Hudson, Michael Birnbaum

New York Times – Edward Wong, Michael Crowley

Wall Street Journal – Vivian Salama, Will Mauldin

LA Times – Tracy Wilkinson

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FT – Felicia Schwartz

Al-Hurra – Michel Ghandour

VOA – Guita Mirsaedi, Nike Ching, Cindy Saine-Spang

NHK – Ben Marks

Kyodo – Sarah Ampolsk

Al-Monitor – Elizabeth Hagedorn

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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Drafted: EUR/Press — (b)(6)

Cleared:

EUR/FO: DAS Coulter

EUR/FO: DAS Smith

EUR/PPD: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/PPD: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/PPD/OSC: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/EE: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/RUS: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/RPM/OSCE: (b)(6) (ok)

EUR/ERA: info

EUR/ACE: info

Emb Kyiv: (b)(6) (ok)

UNCLASSIFIED

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: EUR-Press
Sent: Thu, 15 Feb 2024 19:10:50 +0000
To: EUR-Ukraine Desk-DL; EUR-RUS-DL; Coulter, Sonata N; Smith, Christopher W;
(b)(6)
Cc: EUR-Press; Langenkamp, Daniel B
Subject: 2-year Background Briefing Transcript
Attachments: Background (02-14-2024) SSDOs on Russia-Ukraine War.docx

Dear Colleagues,

The internal, unedited transcript from yesterday's background bullpen briefing with DASes Smith and Coulter is attached.

Many thanks to DAS Smith and DAS Coulter for stepping in for the A/S and taking the time to brief the bullpen to provide such valuable insights that will shape reporting on the 2-year.

Kind regards,

(b)(6)

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**BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS
ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR**

February 14, 2024
Washington, D.C.

MODERATOR: So we've got special guests joining us today from our Bureau for European and Eurasian Affairs. Have a – please, have a seat. Take that – just take those seats. And we're going to talk about Russia-Ukraine. We'll do this on background to senior State Department officials. And if you wouldn't mind just introducing yourselves when you ask a question, so we – so our (inaudible) know who you are.

But we've got [Senior State Department Official One] and [Senior State Department Official Two]. But I'll turn it over to you all if you want to make some remarks, and we can get started.

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10

2/14/2024

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QUESTION: Michele Kelemen, NPR. I haven't heard anything about diplomacy in this time. And I know you say that, whatever, Putin's objectives remain the same. But I wonder: Are there any kind of backroom conversations going on? There was this plan for a prisoner swap, which I don't know if we ever heard the results of that investigation, whether all those prisoners were killed in that crash or not. Like, are there any diplomatic efforts going on to end this war that way?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TWO: We've seen no indication that the Kremlin is interested in any kind of serious negotiations to end the war.

QUESTION: Despite his interview with Tucker Carlson?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TWO: We've seen no indication that Putin is serious – (laughter) – about a diplomatic solution.

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Non Responsive

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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From: [b(6)]
Sent: Tue, 5 Mar 2024 18:05:53 -0500
To: Tracy, Lynne M; Holmes, Stephanie E; [b(6)] (Moscow)
Cc: [b(6)] Coulter, Sonata N
Subject: Updates from RUS - March 5

Ambassador, Stephanie, [b(6)] please find RUS' note this week to P. regards, [b(6)]

~~Official - Sensitive - CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: [b(6)] Deputy Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
 Declassify On: 3/5/2049
 Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: [b(6)]
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 6:03 PM
To: [b(6)]@state.sgov.gov>; [b(6)]
 [b(6)]@state.sgov.gov>; [b(6)]@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: Coulter, Sonata N [b(6)] [b(6)]@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Updates from RUS - March 5

Dear [b(6)]

Please find a few updates below that may be of interest:

~~(C)~~ Amciti Detainees:

- **Evan Gershkovich:** House Speaker Mike Johnson has invited Evan's parents to the State of the Union March 7, per press.

[b(1);
[b(6)]

- [Redacted]

- **Alsu Kurmasheva:** Kurmasheva's husband, Pavel Butorin, will be in DC next week and has requested meetings with A/S O'Brien, CA, and the NSC. [b(6)]

[b(6)]

~~(C)~~ Volkov in DC: Navalny's Chief of Staff Leonid Volkov is in town this week. Today he met with A/S O'Brien, DRL SBO Gilchrist, and EUR/ACE [b(6)] [b(1)]

[b(1)]

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

(b)(1)

~~(SBU)~~ **Navalnaya Opts Not to Visit DC:** The White House invited Yulia Navalnaya to join the State of the Union on March 7, but according to her staff she will not visit Washington due to

(b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ **Public Messaging around Russia's Presidential "Elections":**

- (b)(5)

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-

-

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~~(SBU)~~ **RUS/IO ALDAC Forthcoming on Engagement Policy for Russian Officials:** The ALDAC will refresh bilateral and multilateral engagement policy with Russian officials and guidance for countering Russia's influence in multilateral bodies.

~~(SBU)~~ **S Town Hall March 4 with Embassy Moscow:** S pledged full support for Post and praised Post's accomplishments, amid enormous constraints. He highlighted Post's efforts to support detained U.S. citizens, credited leadership for fostering a resilient community, encouraged ongoing efforts to maintain ties with the Russian people, applauded support for human rights defenders, and noted the AMB's attendance at Navalny's funeral sent a strong message.

(b)(6)

Deputy Director

Office of Russian Affairs

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official ~~-Sensitive~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Classified By: (b)(6) Deputy Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 3/5/2049
Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

From: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:29 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Dear (b)(6)

Please find a few updates below that may be of interest:

~~(SBU)~~ **Navalny Update:**

- The funeral is scheduled for February 29. Logistics are as yet unclear; likeminded missions discussing how best to demonstrate support.
- Yulia Navalnaya has no imminent plans to visit Washington; Russian media gearing up smear campaigns targeting her. Navalny Chief of Staff Volkov will visit March 4-6, and the EUR FO plans to meet with him.
- Media reported shortly before yesterday's DPB that Russian authorities had arrested Aleksey Navalny's mother's lawyer. SPOX took a question and we will provide an answer shortly. Post is aware of the reports.

(U) Spox Topper on Orlov Sentence and Nemtsov Anniversary: Russian authorities sentenced "Memorial" Head Oleg Orlov to 2.5 years in prison for statements "discrediting" Russia's armed forces. Ambassador Tracy attended the February 27 sentencing alongside diplomats from 17 other countries. The sentencing occurred exactly on the 9th anniversary of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov's assassination in Moscow. SPOX did a same-day topper at the DPB marking both events.

~~(SBU)~~ **Ambassador-Gershkovich Visit:** During a February 21 visit, Evan was in good health and spirits (b)(6)

(b)(6) He was interested in discussing Navalny's death and Tucker Carlson's Putin interview.

~~(SBU)~~ **S Letter to Borrell:** S signed a letter to HRVP Borrell asking the EU to expand its Iran sanctions covering UAVs to also include ballistic missiles. (b)(5)

(b)(5) The letter will be sent this week.

~~(SBU)~~ **Exercise MILAN 24:** The exercise concluded February 27. To our knowledge, there has been no U.S. media coverage and no mainstream European media coverage to date. EUR

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prepared if asked press points underscoring that the U.S. is not cooperating with Russia (or Iran).

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(b)(1)

Sonata N. Coulter

Deputy Assistant Secretary

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tue, 5 Mar 2024 20:55:38 -0500
To: (b)(6)
Cc: Coulter, Sonata N; (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Updates from RUS - March 5

Thanks, (b)(6)

~~Official - Sensitive~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: (b)(6) Deputy Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
 Declassify On: 3/5/2049
 Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 6:03 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
 (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Updates from RUS - March 5

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(b)(1)

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(b)(6)

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 (b)(1)

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(b)(1)

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(b)(6)

Deputy Director

Office of Russian Affairs

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official - Sensitive

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

From: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:29 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Dear (b)(6)

Please find a few updates below that may be of interest:

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(b)(1)

Sonata N. Coulter

Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/28/2049
Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wed, 28 Feb 2024 20:33:10 -0500
To: Coulter, Sonata N; (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) P/EUR Duty Officer
Subject: RE: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

+ (b)(6)

Many thanks, Sonata! We'll pass to P.

(b)(6)

Official

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Coulter, Sonata N <(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:29 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)
 (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov
Subject: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Dear (b)(6)

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(b)(1)

Sonata N. Coulter

Deputy Assistant Secretary

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

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Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: Coulter, Sonata N
Sent: Wed, 28 Feb 2024 18:02:25 -0500
To: (b)(6)
Subject: RE: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Glad you don't mind that I took the liberty of adding you in 😊

Official

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: (h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Coulter, Sonata N (h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: RE: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Thank you!

Official

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:29 PM
To: (h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
(h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

- Yulia Navalnaya has no imminent plans to visit Washington; Russian media ginning up smear campaigns targeting her. Navalny Chief of Staff Volkov will visit March 4-6, and the EUR FO plans to meet with him.
- Media reported shortly before yesterday's DPB that Russian authorities had arrested Aleksey Navalny's mother's lawyer. SPOX took a question and we will provide an answer shortly. Post is aware of the reports.

(U) Spox Topper on Orlov Sentence and Nemtsov Anniversary: Russian authorities sentenced "Memorial" Head Oleg Orlov to 2.5 years in prison for statements "discrediting" Russia's armed forces. Ambassador Tracy attended the February 27 sentencing alongside diplomats from 17 other countries. The sentencing occurred exactly on the 9th anniversary of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov's assassination in Moscow. SPOX did a same-day topper at the DPB marking both events.

~~(SBU)~~ **Ambassador-Gershkovich Visit:** During a February 21 visit, Evan was in good health and spirits (b)(6)
(b)(6) He was interested in discussing Navalny's death and Tucker Carlson's Putin interview.

~~(SBU)~~ **S Letter to Borrell:** S signed a letter to HRVP Borrell asking the EU to expand its Iran sanctions covering UAVs to also include ballistic missiles. (b)(5)
(b)(5) The letter will be sent this week.

~~(SBU)~~ **Exercise MILAN 24:** The exercise concluded February 27. To our knowledge, there has been no U.S. media coverage and no mainstream European media coverage to date. EUR prepared if asked press points underscoring that the U.S. is not cooperating with Russia (or Iran).

~~(C)~~ **Table Top Exercise with Post:** Ops Crisis Management working level officers held a table top exercise with Embassy Moscow February 27.

(b)(1)

Sonata N. Coulter

Deputy Assistant Secretary

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/28/2049
Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Wed, 21 Feb 2024 06:32:08 -0500
To: Kim, Yuri J
Subject: RE: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

Thank you for the kind words, Ambassador. When I arrived for my first assignment to Moscow (CONS) in 2013, there was a Navalny poster on the balcony of the city apartment across from mine, from when he ran for mayor. It's a very sad arc for someone who challenges the system.

Official - Sensitive

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/20/2049
Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Kim, Yuri J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 12:38 AM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: Holmes, Stephanie E (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Tracy, Lynne M (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: FW: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

(b)(6) Thanks for this excellent report. Appreciate the direct insight that only post can provide as well as the timeliness – both elements add up to relevance and impact. Keep up the good work. Yuri

Official - Sensitive

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/20/2049
Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 9:10 AM
To: Kim, Yuri J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: FW: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

Flagging this great cable from Moscow.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Official - Sensitive~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>**Sent:** Tuesday, February 20, 2024 7:59 AM**To:** nberline (b)(6) EUR-RUS-DL <EUR-RUS-DL@state.sgov.gov>; INR-REA-Russia <INRReaRussia@state.sgov.gov>; Russia-Watchers-DL <Russia-Watchers-DL@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; 'nreynolds (b)(6)

(b)(6) Vacker (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.isa-rue-russia@mail.smil.mil; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>

Cc: Tracy, Lynne M (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Holmes, Stephanie E (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>;

Moscow Executive Staff <MoscowExecutiveStaff@state.sgov.gov>; Moscow-Political-Section-DL

<MoscowPOL@state.sgov.gov>; MoscowPDSection <MoscowPDSection@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)

(b)(6): (b)(7)(C)

Subject: FW: (C) Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

Flagging...

Official - Sensitive~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

From: SMART Core <svcsmarthbtsewssprec1@state.sgov.gov>**Sent:** Tuesday, February 20, 2024 3:56 PM**To:** (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>**Subject:** (C) Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~~~**Sensitive**~~**MRN:**24 MOSCOW 61Reply

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Date/DTG: Feb 20, 2024 / 201251Z FEB 24
From: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *Routine*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, SOCI, PHUM, RU
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 23 MOSCOW 399
B) 23 MOSCOW 499
C) 23 MOSCOW 293
Subject: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

1. ~~(C)~~ Summary and comment: (b)(1)

(b)(1)

(b)(1)

comment.

End summary and

~~(SBU)~~ Still Uncertainty around Death and Body

2. ~~(SBU)~~ As of Tuesday afternoon – four days after Navalny's passing – there continued to be uncertainty regarding the cause of death and the location of his body. Soon after the prison's press release, state media reported that the cause of death had been a blood clot (*otorvalsya tromb*). Over the weekend, however,

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Navalny allies reported that when Navalny's mother arrived at the morgue, she was told it was "sudden death syndrome." Navalny's mother and a lawyer were not permitted to see the body, and reportedly told it was not located in the Salekhard morgue (the city closest to the prison), and later told that authorities would need 14 days to run "chemical tests." Independent outlet *Mediazona* later published footage from a webcam purporting to show a police convoy heading away from the prison sometime around midnight the night before Navalny's mother visited the area. Many commentators concluded the body had been moved in advance of her visit. Separately, *Novaya Gazeta Europe* reported, based on anonymous sources, that Navalny's chest had unusual bruising, as though he had been held down prior to receiving chest compressions, while *Verstka* reported that there had been unusual lockdowns and searches at the prison the day before the death.

3. ~~(SBU)~~ Though Russian law requires releasing the body to the next of kin, a number of commentators said the government could seize on Navalny's "extremist" and "terrorist" designations to avoid handing it over. Even if there were no foul play, most commentators assumed the authorities would want time to think through how a public funeral and burial might affect protest mood in advance of the March 15-17 presidential election. As Berlin-based Carnegie expert Tatiana Stanovaya wrote online, given President Putin's fear of external interference, the regime likely views any unrest resulting from Navalny's death as an attempt by Navalny's supporters to damage the triumph of his re-election.

~~(SBU)~~ In Moscow, Liberal Society in Muted Grief

4. ~~(SBU)~~ While there was a flood of grief online, Moscow's streets were relatively quiet, especially compared to protests at the beginning of the war or in previous Navalny-led actions. On Friday night, several hundred people gathered in what appeared to be an orderly and mostly quiet line to lay flowers at the Solovetsky Stone, a memorial to prisoners of the Gulag on Lubyanka Square, in front of FSB headquarters. Police presence was heavy. Mourners also brought flowers to the Wall of Shame, a memorial to political repression, as well as the memorial to Boris Nemtsov on a bridge adjacent to Red Square. Media reported that the hundreds of flowers, piled high at each location, were removed by plain-clothes security officers overnight. By Saturday morning, Lubyanka Square was quiet and mostly clear of people, except for a few cameramen and a number of conspicuous

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

security types taking pictures of anyone who approached the memorial. By midday, the number of visitors picked up again, as did the number of police. The Australian, Canadian, Danish, and UK ambassadors laid flowers at the site. OVD-Info, which tracks protest-related arrests across Russia, reported 396 people detained over the weekend in 39 cities. Media reports suggested police primarily detained those who unfurled banners or shouted slogans, while mostly leaving quiet mourners alone. Ambassador Tracy laid flowers at the site Sunday morning, the square mostly quiet and empty. (b)(6) reported the same later that afternoon, and speculated that the arrests from days prior might have dampened turnout.



Left: Solovetsky Stone piled high with flowers. Right: Area around the stone early Saturday morning.

~~(SBU)~~ Opposition's Next Steps Unclear

5. ~~(SBU)~~ Yuliya Navalnaya – Alexey's wife – briefly addressed the Munich Security Conference on Friday, soon after news broke of her husband's death. Visibly shaken, she said she held Putin personally responsible for Alexey's death – as well as "what they've done to the country" – and called for the defeat of "this horrific regime." Over the weekend, she released a video reminiscent of Alexey's, asserting that she knew who was responsible for the death and would reveal the details of an investigation soon. Separately, independent outlet *Kholod* published a list of names and pictures of all Russian officials who had been involved in

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Navalny's various investigations and court proceedings under the headline "Evil has a name." But given the preexisting organizational tensions within Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation and the opposition movement more generally (B-C), it remained as unclear as ever how Russia's regime opponents and anti-war protestors might proceed in Navalny's absence.

~~(SBU)~~ Supporters: The Candle as the Last Available Protest

6. ~~(SBU)~~ Liberal commentators and Navalny supporters were uniform in their grief and generally saw Navalny's death as marking the end of hope for the opposition movement within the country. Carnegie expert Andrei Kolesnikov called the candles, carried by individuals to the memorial, "the last weapon of a civilized person and citizen," and labeled the authorities the "not the heirs of the Great Victory of 1945, [but] of the Great Terror of 1938." Yuri Dud, one of Russia's most popular YouTube journalists, who interviewed Navalny while he recovered in Germany from Novichok poisoning, wrote that, "Putin's Russia is built on fear" but Navalny had provided an example of "fearlessness," his "superpower" after deciding to return to the country in January 2021. Dud hoped that the "signal" of fearlessness would permeate society even after death. Popular liberal blogger Alexander Gorbunov (Stalin_Gulag) argued that Navalny's power stemmed from his hopeful recognition that he worked with and for the Russian people, and did not see them as "genetic slaves...who cannot live without a strong hand." Gorbunov opined that there were few liberal political actors willing to take the same approach.

7. ~~(S)~~ (b)(1); (b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ Propagandists: This Doesn't Benefit The Kremlin, So It Was the West!

8. ~~(SBU)~~ Though Putin has still not commented on the death, officials and propagandists wasted little time in fostering conspiracies. Duma Speaker Volodin issued a statement saying, "Washington and Brussels are to blame for Navalny's

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

death," because, "Who benefits from Navalny's death?...those who imposed more than 19,000 sanctions against Russia [and] are losing the war in Ukraine." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wondered, on Telegram, why "for the White House and the State Department the death of a Russian citizen in a Russian penal colony turned out to be much more important and more terrible than the death of an American citizen, journalist Gonzalo Lira," in Ukraine.

9. ~~(SBU)~~ On his Sunday evening show, Kremlin mouthpiece Vladimir Solovyov and RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan said it was curious that Navalny had died right as Western leaders gathered for the Munich Security Conference, as though they hoped his death would galvanize support against Russia and distract from Putin's recent interview with Tucker Carlson. "The timing raises big questions," said Simonyan, continuing, "it doesn't benefit Russia or the government, but for them the timing is excellent, with elections coming up." (Note: Navalny ally Ilya Yashin, writing from prison where he is serving his own eight-and-a-half year term for spreading "false information" about the war, called "complete nonsense" the idea, spread by state propaganda, that killing Navalny a month before the election would be "illogical." "In Putin's understanding, this is how power is asserted: through murder, cruelty, and demonstrative revenge," wrote Yashin. End note.) In a particularly odious turn, she then criticized Yuliya Navalnaya for making a number of statements at the Conference, "as though she didn't really love her husband, but power and press conferences."

10. ~~(SBU)~~ In a more restrained comment, the popular anonymous Telegram channel *Nezygar* – widely assumed to be written by someone within the Presidential Administration – wrote that the majority of Russians saw Navalny as someone who went against the system, which was both dangerous and futile. His death was, therefore, foreseeable, and would not have any effect on the system itself. The writer further speculated, as other pro-regime commentators have, that Navalny's death and Navalnaya's outspoken approach, could lead to calls in the West for a "government in exile." "This radical rhetoric, clearly agreed upon by curators from Western countries, should not be ignored," the channel's author wrote.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Signature: TRACY

Classified By: Name: Tracy, L., Title: Ambassador

Office: Moscow

Agency: State

Derived From: DSCG 23-1**Declassify On:** February 20, 2049**Drafted By:** MOSCOW (b)(6)**Cleared By:** POL (b)(6)

A/DCM: Turner, Mark

Approved By: AMB: Tracy, L.**Released By:** MOSCOW (b)(6)**Info:** CIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE *Routine*; CIS COLLECTIVE *Routine*; ZEN/DUSSELDORF, AMCONSUL; ZEN/HAMBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/LEIPZIG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/STRASBOURG, AMCONSUL**XMT:** MINSK, AMEMBASSY; ZEN/NUUK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/ST PETERSBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/VLADIVOSTOK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/YEKATERINBURG, AMCONSUL

Action Post: NONE**Dissemination Rule:** CONS, POL, PAS, DAO_INFO~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~Sensitive~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tue, 20 Feb 2024 17:02:16 -0500
To: Kim, Yuri J
Subject: RE: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

So kind of you. Thank you for sending.

Official - Sensitive

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

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Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 4:38 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: FW: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

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Official - Sensitive

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

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Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: FW: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

Flagging this great cable from Moscow.

Official - Sensitive

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

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(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; 'nreynolds (b)(6)

(h)(6) Vacker (h)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.isa-rue-russia@mail.smil.mil; (h)(6)

(h)(6)@state.sgov.gov>

Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Holmes, Stephanie E (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>;

Moscow Executive Staff <MoscowExecutiveStaff@state.sgov.gov>; Moscow-Political-Section-DL

<MoscowPOL@state.sgov.gov>; MoscowPDSection <MoscowPDSection@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6); (b)(7)(C)

(b)(6): (b)(7)(C)

Subject: FW: (C) Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

Flagging...

~~Official - Sensitive~~~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office:Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *Routine*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, SOCI, PHUM, RU
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) 23 MOSCOW 399
B) 23 MOSCOW 499
C) 23 MOSCOW 293
Subject: ~~(C)~~ Russia: Navalny's Death as Final Triumph of Repressive Machine

1. ~~(C)~~ (b)(1)

(b)(1)

(b)(6)

End summary and

comment.

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

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Signature:

TRACY

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Classified By: Name: Tracy, L., Title: Ambassador
Office: Moscow
Agency: State

Derived From: DSCG 23-1

Declassify On: February 20, 2049

Drafted By: MOSCOW (b)(6)

Cleared By: POL: (b)(6)
A/DCM: Turner, Mark

Approved By: AMB: Tracy, L.

Released By: MOSCOW (b)(6)

Info: CIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE *Routine*; CIS COLLECTIVE *Routine*; ZEN/DUSSELDORF, AMCONSUL; ZEN/HAMBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/LEIPZIG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/STRASBOURG, AMCONSUL

XMT: MINSK, AMEMBASSY; ZEN/NUUK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/ST PETERSBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/VLADIVOSTOK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/YEKATERINBURG, AMCONSUL

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: CONS, POL, PAS, DAO_INFO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~~~Sensitive~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6) (Moscow)
Sent: Wed, 27 Mar 2024 12:14:34 -0400
To: O'Brien, James C; Kim, Yuri J; (b)(6) nberliner@(b)(6)
EUR-RUS-DL; INR-REA-Russia; Russia-Watchers-DL; (b)(6)
(b)(6) 'nreynolds(b)(6); VAcker(b)(6) Coulter, Sonata N;
osd.pentagon.ousd-policy.list.isa-rue-russia@mail.smil.mil
Cc: Tracy, Lynne M; Holmes, Stephanie E; Moscow Executive Staff; Moscow-
Political-Section-DL; MoscowPDSection; (b)(6) JS'; (b)(6)
MCOWORC1@oma.sgov.gov
Subject: FW: Russia in Putin's Words: U.S. and Ukraine behind International Terrorism

Colleagues: flagging Embassy Moscow's analysis of Putin and the Kremlin's public response to the March 22 Crocus City Hall terrorist attack thus far. Thanks, (b)(6)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~Sensitive~~



Action Office: PAS, POL, RSO, LEGAT, CONS, ORA
Info Office: DAO_INFO

MRN: [24 MOSCOW 119](#) [Reply](#)
Date/DTG: Mar 27, 2024 / 271602Z MAR 24
From: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *Routine*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, SOCI, PHUM, PTER, RU
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: [24 MOSCOW 109](#)
Pass Line: AMCONSUL FRANKFURT PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT PASS TO AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY PARIS PASS TO AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

Subject: Russia in Putin's Words: U.S. and Ukraine behind International Terrorism

1. ~~(C)~~ **Summary and comment:** In public comments following the March 22 terrorist attack on Crocus City Hall, President Putin has all but accused the United States of orchestrating the attack, while insinuating Ukraine and its supporters likely played some role. Senior Russian officials have subsequently made the link explicit, blaming the United States and Ukraine. It was a textbook Kremlin information operation – Putin outlined the contours of the conspiracy, senior officials solidified the claims, and Kremlin propagandists illuminated the disinformation with provocative details. Since launching its war against Ukraine, the Kremlin has consistently labeled internal unrest or security incidents as “terrorism” and tied them to Western actors, including Ukraine. At the same time, Putin has, for over two decades, spoken publicly about his belief that the United States sponsored international terrorism, “created” ISIS and Al-Qaeda, and stoked Chechen separatism. Meanwhile, adding to the Kremlin’s mental and linguistic contortions of reality, Russian authorities have designated “the international LGBT movement” and Aleksey Navalny’s anti-corruption efforts as “terrorists,” and Meta/Facebook as “extremist,” while regularly hosting delegations from Hamas and the Taliban. The fog of the conspiracy provides the Kremlin justification to do as it sees fit, at home and abroad. For many years, Stalin sent thousands to the Gulag for the barest perception of “Zinoviev-Trotskyite-deviationist” sympathies – which he, himself, defined. Putin has found new conspiratorial nonsense to prosecute the war and repressions at home. **End summary and comment.**

2. ~~(SBU)~~ This is the latest in a series of recurring “Russia in Putin’s Words” cables analyzing Putin’s public rhetoric and discourse. [REDACTED]

(b)(5)

(b)(5) [REDACTED] This edition draws primarily from comments Putin made March 19 to the FSB, March 23 in his address to the nation following the Crocus City Hall terrorist attack, and in a March 25 meeting with government officials.

~~(SBU)~~ **Putin Stops Just Short of Blaming U.S. for Attack, but Blames Ukraine**

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

3. ~~(SBU)~~ Putin, 17 hours after the March 22 ISIS attack on Crocus City Hall and portrayed by state television as diligently issuing orders and considering the facts of the situation, asserted the terrorists were endeavoring to flee to Ukraine, where a “window” had been opened for them. Without explicitly pointing to the United States, he pledged to find and punish those who “stood behind the terrorists.” He then compared the attack to a “show execution” and a Nazi massacre. Given his mention of Ukraine and his repeated comparisons of Ukraine and its partners to the Nazis, the implication was clear: though Islamic terrorists undertook the attack, it was sponsored by Ukraine and the West.

4. ~~(SBU)~~ Putin all but explicitly blamed the United States in his March 26 remarks to government officials. While acknowledging that “radical Islamists” committed the attack, he insisted Russia would uncover the “customer” (*zakazchik*). “Who benefits from this?” he asked, rhetorically – a question that has widespread resonance with a conspiracy-minded public. “This atrocity may be only a link in a whole series of attempts by those who have been fighting our country since 2014 at the hands of the neo-Nazi Kyiv regime,” he said, answering his own question. Suggesting there was a “customer” – as opposed to ISIS planning and executing the attack – is easily understood by many Russians, conditioned by countless uninvestigated murders to assume ultimate responsibility lies with some shadowy outside force.

~~(SBU)~~ Senior Russian Officials Repeat – and Make Explicit – the Conspiratorial Message

5. ~~(SBU)~~ Several senior Russian officials subsequently took Putin’s conspiratorial message a step further by explicitly accusing the United States of orchestrating the attack. In response to a March 26 press question about whether the United States, Great Britain, and Ukraine were behind the attack, FSB Director Bortnikov said, “We think so.” He added that Ukraine had intended to “greet them [the attackers] as heroes” on the other side of the border. At the same event, when asked if the attack was committed by ISIS or Ukraine, Security Council Secretary Patrushev responded, “Ukraine, of course.” Duma Speaker Volodin said March 27 that the “terrorists and those who stand behind them, the bloody regime of Ukraine, Washington, [and] Brussels” hoped the attacks would “split our society [and] sow discord.” MFA spokesperson Zakharova said March 27 that the U.S.

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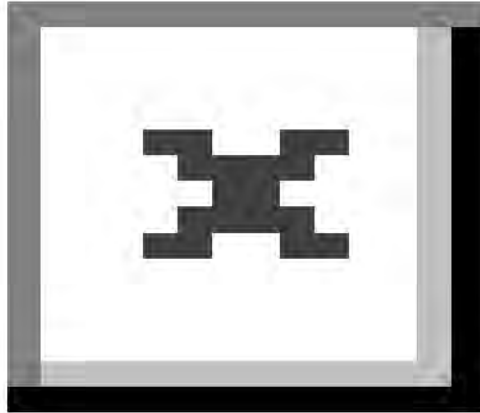
“commitment and involvement in this story is obvious,” because, counterintuitively, the United States had so promptly denied Ukrainian involvement. Also on March 27, Russia’s Investigative Committee announced it had initiated an investigation into “the organization, financing and conduct of terrorist acts by the United States and other Western countries directed against Russia,” at the request of three Duma representatives and right-wing ideologue Alexander Dugin.

~~(SBU)~~ Kremlin Conflates All Threats as “Terrorism”

6. ~~(SBU)~~ In the context of Russia’s war against Ukraine, Putin and senior officials have consistently conflated civil unrest and threats to Russian territory as “terrorism,” and actions to suppress any internal threats to the regime or the “constitutional order” as “counterterrorism.” In his March 25 remarks, after outlining Ukrainian war objectives – e.g. “the attempts to enter and gain a foothold in our border territories,” “shelling...[of] energy infrastructure,” and “attempted missile attacks on the Crimean Bridge” – Putin said the March 22 ISIS attack “logically fit into this series.” When asked in the March 26 press appearance whether a terrorist threat still existed in Russia, Bortnikov likewise conflated the two issues, seamlessly responding, “Yes, you see what is happening in Belgorod, Kursk, and Bryansk...we have to do everything to stop events like that which happened at Crocus City Hall.” In a March 26 event also attended by Putin, Prosecutor General Krasnov said the “performers, customers, and curators [of the March 22 attack] will inevitably be punished,” and – in the very next sentence – “That is why the most important task for Russia remains achieving the goals of the special military operation.” In other words, all threats to Russia – whether from ISIS or justified war aims – constitute “terrorism.”

7. ~~(SBU)~~ While this likely represents cynical and deliberate obfuscation, it also represents new institutional priorities. According to an investigation by *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, the vast majority of “terrorist” activities prevented by the FSB in recent years have been attributed to Ukrainian special services. At the same time, the number attributed to Islamist groups fell markedly in 2022.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.



8. ~~(SBU)~~ At the same time, Putin has long blamed the United States for “creating” Al-Qaeda and ISIS and – in an example he has cited repeatedly for two decades – for allegedly supporting Chechen separatist groups. In his February interview with Tucker Carlson, Putin asserted that the United States had provided “political support, information support, financial support, even military support...to terrorist groups in the Caucasus.” In his June 2023 plenary address to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin asserted, “When al-Qaeda began to fight against us in the Caucasus, everyone forgot [they were an enemy, because] if something can be used in the fight against Russia, it is used to the fullest.” In a 2017 Oliver Stone documentary, Putin said, “When we started having problems in Chechnya and the North Caucasus, unfortunately, the Americans supported these processes.” “The Americans themselves raised both al-Qaeda and bin Laden,” he added, “but it all got out of control.” He made similar claims in interviews in 2004 and 2015.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Signature: TRACY

Classified By: Name: Lynne Tracy, Title: Ambassador

Office: U.S. Embassy Moscow

Agency: Department of State

Derived From: DSCG 23-1

Declassify On: March 27, 2049

Drafted By: ECON:(b)(6)

Cleared By: Pol/Econ:(b)(6)

EXEC:Holmes, Stephanie

Approved By: EXEC:Tracy, Lynne

Released By: MOSCOW:(b)(6)

Info: CIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE *Routine*; CIS COLLECTIVE *Routine*; ZEN/DUSSELDORF, AMCONSUL; ZEN/HAMBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/LEIPZIG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/STRASBOURG, AMCONSUL

XMT: MINSK, AMEMBASSY; ZEN/NUUK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/ST PETERSBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/VLADIVOSTOK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/YEKATERINBURG, AMCONSUL

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: PAS, POL, RSO, LEGAT, DAO_INFO, CONS, ORA

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~Sensitive~~



Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Official

~~**CONFIDENTIAL**~~

Classified By: Lynne Tracy - Ambassador, Office:Embassy Moscow, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 3/27/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: Bitter, Rena (Ambassador Vientiane)
Sent: Thu, 29 Feb 2024 10:25:53 -0500
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Cc: (b)(6) Bass, John R; Inzerillo, Suzanne M; (b)(6)
Kerwin, Angela M
Subject: FW: Penny's Six MSC Takeaways

Hey Toria – just to you

(b)(1); (b)(5)

We'll keep you posted.

Official

~~SECRET~~

Classified By: Karen Donfried - A/S, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/20/2049
Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

~~Official~~

~~SECRET~~

Classified By: Karen Donfried - A/S, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/20/2049
Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Bitter, Rena (Ambassador Vientiane) (b)(6) @state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 8:20 AM
To: (b)(6) @state.sgov.gov>
Cc: Rodriguez, Hugo F (b)(6) @state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6) @state.sgov.gov>
Subject: FW: Penny's Six MSC Takeaways

Think this is us!

Official

~~SECRET~~

Classified By: Karen Donfried - A/S, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: Nuland, Victoria J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 5:32 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; O'Brien, James C (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; George, Suzy (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Brink, Bridget A (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Kim, Yuri J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Smith, Christopher W (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Toloui, Ramin (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Pyatt, Geoffrey R (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Ramos, D. Jacqueline (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Bitter, Rena (Ambassador Vientiane) (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: RE: Penny's Six MSC Takeaways

Hugely helpful, thanks, (b)(6) OK to share w (b)(6) when he is on line? (b)(1): (b)(5)
 (b)(1): (b)(5)

(b)(6) see highlight below – anything we can/should do?

Official

~~**SECRET**~~

Classified By: Karen Donfried - A/S, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State
 Declassify On: 2/20/2049
 Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 2:07 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; O'Brien, James C (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; George, Suzy (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Brink, Bridget A (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Kim, Yuri J (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Smith, Christopher W (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Toloui, Ramin (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Pyatt, Geoffrey R (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Ramos, D. Jacqueline (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Penny's Six MSC Takeaways

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Penny asked me to share a note with some of her impressions coming out of the weekend. We will have our raw notes from the meetings ready for distribution later today. Best, (b)(6)

Coming back from the Munich Security Conference (b)(1); (b)(5); (b)(6)

(b)(1)

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(1); (b)(5); (b)(6)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

(b)(1); (b)(5)

(b)(1); (b)(5)

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~~**SECRET**~~

Classified By: Karen Donfried - A/S, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/20/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tue, 12 Mar 2024 17:39:13 -0400
To: Coulter, Sonata N
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: FW: Note to P- Updates from RUS - March 12

Take 2: this time with Volkov

Official

~~SECRET~~

Classified By: (b)(6) - Office Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
Declassify On: 3/12/2034
Reasons: (Derived) Classification derived from previous message(s)

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 5:32 PM
To: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Note to P- Updates from RUS - March 12

Sonata,
For your review and push up please.

Very best,

(b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

(b)(1); (b)(6)

(U) Volkov attacked at home: On Tuesday night, Navalny aid and former Anti-Corruption Foundation Chairman Leonid Volkov was attacked at his home in Lithuania. According to Navalny's spokeswoman, someone broke a car window and sprayed tear gas in his eyes, then hit him with a hammer. An ambulance is on the way.

~~(S)~~(b)(1); (b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ **Russian Presidential Elections:** Elections within Russia begin March 15 and conclude March 17; elections are already underway in occupied Ukraine. Embassy Moscow will send unclass sitreps to Ops throughout the weekend and plans on a front channel March 18. We aim to release an S statement on the staging of elections in occupied Ukraine, along with a guidance ALDAC to posts on the USG position on these sham elections, the evening of March 13. We also aim to release an S statement calling the results pre-determined after Putin's re-election is announced. State's election messaging will be one topic at the March 14 DSG.

~~(SBU)~~ **Russia-related New York Meetings:**

- a. March 15: USUN/Slovenia meeting on Russian elections in Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine. Ukraine asked USG to sign onto joint statement for press stakeout ahead of the UNSC meeting. Nothing controversial in the text.
- b. March 22: Russia-called retaliatory UNSC meeting on Ukraine.
- c. March TBD: Russia-called Arria-formula meeting on Western arms transfers to Ukraine.

Official

~~SECRET~~

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Classified By: (b)(6) - Deputy Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
 Declassify On: 3/12/2049
 Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Official

~~SECRET~~

Classified By: (b)(6) - Office Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State
 Declassify On: 3/12/2034
 Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

From: (b)(6)

Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 6:03 PM

To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov

Cc: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov

Subject: Updates from RUS - March 5

Dear (b)(6)

Please find a few updates below that may be of interest:

~~(E)~~ **Amcit Detainees:**

- **Evan Gershkovich:** House Speaker Mike Johnson has invited Evan's parents to the State of the Union March 7, per press.

- (b)(1)

- **Alsu Kurmasheva:** Kurmasheva's husband, Pavel Butorin, will be in DC next week and has requested meetings with A/S O'Brien, CA, and the NSC. (b)(6)

(b)(6)

~~(E)~~ **Volkov in DC:** Navalny's Chief of Staff Leonid Volkov is in town this week. Today he met with A/S O'Brien, DRL SBO Gilchrist, and EUR/ACE (b)(6) (b)(1)

(b)(1)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

~~(SBU)~~ **Navalnaya Opts Not to Visit DC:** The White House invited Yulia Navalnaya to join the State of the Union on March 7, but according to her staff she will not visit Washington due to (b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ **Public Messaging around Russia's Presidential "Elections":**

- (b)(5)
-
-
-

~~(SBU)~~ **Russia at the UNSC:** USUN and Slovenia will jointly hold a UN Security Council meeting on Russian elections in occupied Ukraine and Navalny's death. Separately, the Russian Mission to the UN called a UNSC meeting on Ukraine on March 22. Russia also plans to host an Arria formula meeting in March on Western arms transfers to Ukraine.

~~(SBU)~~ **RUS/IO ALDAC Forthcoming on Engagement Policy for Russian Officials:** The ALDAC will refresh bilateral and multilateral engagement policy with Russian officials and guidance for countering Russia's influence in multilateral bodies.

~~(SBU)~~ **S Town Hall March 4 with Embassy Moscow:** S pledged full support for Post and praised Post's accomplishments, amid enormous constraints. He highlighted Post's efforts to support detained U.S. citizens, credited leadership for fostering a resilient community, encouraged ongoing efforts to maintain ties with the Russian people, applauded support for human rights defenders, and noted the AMB's attendance at Navalny's funeral sent a strong message.

(b)(6)

Deputy Director
Office of Russian Affairs
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official - Sensitive

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: (b)(6) - Deputy Director, Office:EUR/RUS, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 3/5/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: Coulter, Sonata N (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 1:29 PM
To: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)
(b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>; (b)(6)@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: Updates from RUS - Feb 28

Dear (b)(6)

Please find a few updates below that may be of interest:

~~(SBU)~~ **Navalny Update:**

- The funeral is scheduled for February 29. Logistics are as yet unclear; likeminded missions discussing how best to demonstrate support.
- Yulia Navalnaya has no imminent plans to visit Washington; Russian media ginning up smear campaigns targeting her. Navalny Chief of Staff Volkov will visit March 4-6, and the EUR FO plans to meet with him.
- Media reported shortly before yesterday's DPB that Russian authorities had arrested Aleksey Navalny's mother's lawyer. SPOX took a question and we will provide an answer shortly. Post is aware of the reports.

(U) Spox Topper on Orlov Sentence and Nemtsov Anniversary: Russian authorities sentenced "Memorial" Head Oleg Orlov to 2.5 years in prison for statements "discrediting" Russia's armed forces. Ambassador Tracy attended the February 27 sentencing alongside diplomats from 17 other countries. The sentencing occurred exactly on the 9th anniversary of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov's assassination in Moscow. SPOX did a same-day topper at the DPB marking both events.

~~(SBU)~~ **Ambassador-Gershkovich Visit:** During a February 21 visit, Evan was in good health and spirits (b)(6)

(b)(6) He was interested in discussing Navalny's death and Tucker Carlson's Putin interview.

~~(SBU)~~ **S Letter to Borrell:** S signed a letter to HRVP Borrell asking the EU to expand its Iran sanctions covering UAVs to also include ballistic missiles. (b)(5)

(b)(5) The letter will be sent this week.

~~(SBU)~~ **Exercise MILAN 24:** The exercise concluded February 27. To our knowledge, there has been no U.S. media coverage and no mainstream European media coverage to date. EUR prepared if asked press points underscoring that the U.S. is not cooperating with Russia (or Iran).

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

~~(C)~~ **Table Top Exercise with Post:** Ops Crisis Management working level officers held a table top exercise with Embassy Moscow February 27.

(b)(1)

Sonata N. Coulter

Deputy Assistant Secretary

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Official

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: Sonata Coulter - DAS, Office:EUR, Agency:U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/28/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

From: (b)(6) (Moscow)
Sent: Thu, 8 Feb 2024 05:03:40 -0500
To: nberliner (b)(6) EUR-RUS-DL; INR-REA-Russia; Russia-Watchers-DL;
 (b)(6) 'nreynolds (b)(6);
 VAcker (b)(6) (b)(6) Coulter, Sonata N; (b)(6) osd.pentagon.ousd-
 policy.list.isa-rue-russia@mail.smil.mil; (b)(6)
Cc: Tracy, Lynne M; Holmes, Stephanie E; Moscow Executive Staff; Moscow-
 Political-Section-DL; MoscowPDSection; (b)(6)
Subject: FW: (C) (b)(1)
 (b)(1)

Flagging. With content relevant to today's Nadezhdin decision and Putin's upcoming interview.

Official - Sensitive

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified By: L. Tracy - AMB, Office: Moscow, Agency: U.S. Department of State

Declassify On: 2/8/2049

Reasons: Derived Per DSCG.

From: SMART Core <svcsmarthbtsewshprec1@state.sgov.gov>

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2024 1:02 PM

To: (b)(6) @state.sgov.gov

Subject: (C) (b)(1)

(b)(1)

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~~Sensitive~~

MRN: 24 MOSCOW 45 [Reply](#)
Date/DTG: Feb 08, 2024 / 080959Z FEB 24
From: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE *Routine*
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, ECON, SOCI, PHUM, RU
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: A) [23 MOSCOW 115](#)
 B) [24 MOSCOW 27](#)

Subject: C) 23 MOSCOW 487
~~(C)~~ Russia:

(b)(1)

1. ~~(C)~~ Summary and comment:

(b)(1); (b)(6)

End summary and comment.

~~(C)~~ The Election (b)(1)

2. ~~(C)~~

(b)(1); (b)(6)

Withheld pursuant to exemption

(b)(1); (b)(6)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

(b)(1); (b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ For Most Russians, the War “Isn’t So Bad”

6. ~~(C)~~ (b)(1); (b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

7. ~~(C)~~ (b)(1); (b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

~~(SBU)~~ Repression Designed to Prevent People from Opposing System

8. ~~(C)~~ (b)(1)

(b)(1)

(b)(1)

~~(SBU)~~ Putin to Use Interview to Portray Himself as Reasonable to the World

9. ~~(C)~~ (b)(1); (b)(6)

(b)(1); (b)(6)

Signature: TRACY

Classified By: Name: Tracly, L., Title: Ambassador

Office: Moscow

Agency: State

Derived From: DSCG 23-1

Declassify On: February 8, 2049

Drafted By: MOSCOW: (b)(6)

Cleared By: POL-ECON: (b)(6)

DCM: Holmes, Stephanie

Approved By: AMB: Tracy, L.

Released By: MOSCOW (b)(6)

Obtained via FOIA by Judicial Watch, Inc.

Info: CIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; DIA WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *Routine*; EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE *Routine*; CIS COLLECTIVE *Routine*; ZEN/DUSSELDORF, AMCONSUL; ZEN/HAMBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/LEIPZIG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/STRASBOURG, AMCONSUL

XMT: MINSK, AMEMBASSY; ZEN/NUUK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/ST PETERSBURG, AMCONSUL; ZEN/VLADIVOSTOK, AMCONSUL; ZEN/YEKATERINBURG, AMCONSUL

Action Post: NONE

Dissemination Rule: POL, CONS, PAS, DAO_INFO

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~Sensitive~~

