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## Putin: We will never let the USA control Russia

12/17/2015



In the beginning of the press conference, Putin spoke about the current state of affairs in the Russian economy. According to Putin, the falling oil prices seriously affected the Russian economy and all of its key indicators. GDP fell by 3.7%, the inflation rate made up 12.3%.

Putin said that the forecast of \$50 per barrel of oil for the Russian budget in 2016 will have to be revised. The federal budget deficit in 2015 will amount to 2.8-2.9% of GDP, and this is quite a satisfactory indicator, the president said. The unemployment rate of 5.6% is an achievement, including of the Russian government, Putin said. According to him, the positive trade balance has been preserved, while Russia's foreign debt has reduced by 13 percent compared to 2014; the outflow of capital has decreased significantly as well. The inflow of capital in the third quarter of the outgoing year testifies to the restoration of investor interest in the Russian economy. Putin also pointed out the success of the Russian agriculture against the backdrop of sanctions.

## **Putin supports Central Bank policy**

A RIA Novosti journalist asked Putin whether he supported the policy of the Central Bank against the background of the complicated situation in the Russian economy and high interest rate on loans.

"I can answer your question directly. I support the policy of the Central Bank to ensure macroeconomic stability. With all desire, one can not just raise the rate, one must proceed from the situation. The economic structure in foreign countries is different. To lower the rate, one should help the Central Bank and the government suppress inflation and inflationary risks. The rate will then decrease in a quiet market way. The Central Bank supports the sectors of economy that can be supported, Putin said, adding that the Russian government works effectively in general.

## **Government work generally satisfactory**

"During quite a long period of my work, one could notice that I very carefully treat: a) people and b) I believe that the government reshuffle is not needed. If someone can not cope with their work duties, I think that there is my fault there too, because I am also responsible for that," said Putin. The President said the work of the Cabinet of Ministers was "generally satisfactory", but admitted that the government can work better.

## **Putin sees no prospects to improve ties with Turkey**

A journalist asked Putin whether the Kremlin administration was going to sever all ties with the Turkic world after Turkey shot down the Russian plane.

"Our plane was shot down, people were killed - this is not a friendly act, but a hostile one", Putin said. "The Turkish side has not apologized, but immediately rushed to seek the protection of NATO. That's what hurt the Russians," said the President.

"If it were an accident, as they said, the Turkish authorities said that they did not know it was a Russian jet, then in such cases people pick up the phone and explain everything. Was it hard to pick up the phone and talk to us? No one has told us anything. We expressed our readiness to cooperate with Turkey. Did they think that we were going to escape from Syria or what? This is the reason why there are so many Russian weapons now in Syria and various anti-missile systems," Putin said.

**The current situation has probably developed for the reason that "someone out there**

**wanted to lick the Americans."**

"I think that ISIS is a minor thing now. There is a game being played there, in which economic interests are involved, - Putin said. - We started to bomb the convoys, and now they go to Iraq through the Iraqi Kurdistan region. In one location, we found 11,000 oil tankers."

"The Turkic peoples have been and will remain our partners. Yet, we can not build a dialogue with the current Turkish government. On the state level, I do not see any prospects to improve our relations, but not on the humanitarian level, of course," Putin said.

Speaking about sanctions in the field of tourism, the president said that Turkey is now a resort for the terrorists, who come to the country holding Syrian passports before they cross the border of the Russian Federation.

### **Assad's future was discussed during John Kerry's visit to Moscow**

Responding to a question about the fate of Syrian President Bashar Assad, the president said that the question was discussed at the recent meeting with US Secretary of State John.

However, he added, Russia will never tolerate anyone dictating who should rule where and how. "We talked about it with US Secretary of State John Kerry. We believe that it is only the Syrian people who should decide who will be in power in their country. We support the initiative of the United States for the preparation of a UN Security Council resolution on Syria. In general, it suits us. I think that it suits the Syrian authorities too. A compromise is always possible, but concessions have to be made on both sides. Both the US and Europe are highly concerned about what is happening in the Middle East. We will do everything to facilitate the resolution of the crisis," Putin said.

Speaking about the Russian anti-terrorist campaign in Syria, Putin said that the operation of the Russian Air Force in Syria would be conducted as long as the army of Syria needs Russia's support.

When asked about the future of the Russian army base in Syria's Latakia, Vladimir Putin said he did not know whether Russia needed the base in Syria. "What do we need that base for? If we need to get someone, we will get them anyway," Putin said.

As for the financial constituent of the operation in Syria, Putin stated that it was of no significance for the Russian budget. We have thousands of people and thousands of aircraft participating in military exercises every year. The Defense Ministry reallocated its funds. We can

thus train there for a long time without causing significant damage to ourselves," Putin said.

Strangely enough, Russia's plan on Syria coincides with that of the United States on key positions, such as the constitution and election control, Putin said. As for the Russian operation in Syria, he said that Russia will support the offensive movement of the Syrian army as long as it conducts military actions.

### **About relations with Ukraine: Feel the difference**

A Ukrainian journalist asked Putin about the prospects of Russia's relations with Ukraine.

"We have never said that there are no people in Ukraine who work there to solve certain issues in the military field, but it does not mean that there are regular Russian troops in the country - feel the difference," Putin said.

Putin predicted the worsening of economic relations between Russia and Ukraine because of Kiev's EU integration agreement. Russia tried to maintain economic relations with Ukraine, but Kiev pulls out from all agreements and joins EU rules, Putin said. According to him, Russia is not going to impose any sanctions on Ukraine, but Russia will not give any privileges and preferences to Ukraine anymore.

According to the Russian president, Ukraine violates the Minsk Accord and takes counteraction for its implementation.

### **About working with new US president**

Russia will always be developing relations with Washington, and it does not matter who takes the White House.

"A new American President? One should at first understand who it will be. In any case, whoever it will be, we are ready and willing to develop relations with the United States," Putin said.

Putin stressed out that Moscow would work with any president, whom the American people elect. He noted that the American side is ready to move towards cooperation with Russia.

"They are trying to show us all the time what we need to do in our country, whom to elect, whom not to elect and on which procedures. We never do it to them, we never do there," he said.

### **Putin about his daughters: I do not discuss my family**

During the press conference, Vladimir Putin was asked a question about his daughters.

"I've read a lot of different things about daughters. I've read that they study and live abroad. They live in Russia and have never changed their country of residence. They studied in Russia as well. They still study and work. My daughters are fluent in three European languages - they use these foreign languages for their work. They are taking first career steps, successful steps," the president said.

"I do not discuss my family. My daughters do not do business, nor do they go into politics. I am not going to say where exactly my daughters work for security reasons. My daughters have never had the star disease - they just live their lives," said Vladimir Putin.

During the conference, Putin was asked about the doping scandal that has recently occurred to several Russian athletes, as well as about the recent corruption scandal at FIFA. The journalist wondered if the West was involved in the two scandals. Putin responded that the West was definitely involved.

"I consider the practice of intervention in the affairs of another state unacceptable. I hope that we will proceed from domination to attempts of cooperation in our relations with Western partners. Russia will be open to working together to solve the problem of doping in sport," said Putin.

"I will require all officials of all departments and at all levels openly work with international structures without camouflaging or hiding anything," Putin said. "We are against any doping, primarily because doping destroys people's health - it is poison for people. It destroys the very principle of open competition," Putin said.

As for the FIFA corruption scandal, Putin said that Russia received the right to host the World Cup in an absolutely fair competition.

"FIFA has listened to us, and it was decided to hold the World Cup 2018 in Russia for the purpose of development of world football, rather than for corruption reasons."

### **About South Stream, Turkish Stream and nuclear power plant in Turkey**

Putin was asked about the fate of major energy projects in light of the crisis of relations with Turkey. The Russian president said that Russia had not made any investment in the construction of Akkuyu nuclear power plant in Turkey.

"Russia has not invested \$3 billion in Akkuyu nuclear power plant," Putin said. The future of the

project should be decided on the corporate level as it is a purely commercial question. We will not take any steps that would harm our economic interests, but this is a matter for Rosatom and its partners."

"We were ready to implement the South Stream project. However, the European Commission demanded Bulgaria should abandon it. A Dutch regulator gave us permission to build the gas pipeline at sea, but we did not receive permission from Bulgaria," Putin said. "The toothless position of the Bulgarian leadership surprises me, because they have neglected the interests of the state," the Russian president said.

As for the Turkish Stream, Russia needs a written guarantee from the European Commission.

"We need to receive written guarantees from the European Commission to ensure that all routes, including the possible route through Turkey to Europe would be a priority. If Turkish partners bring such a document to Gazprom from Brussels, we will move on. For the time being, this is not happening, unfortunately," Putin said.

### **About crisis in relations with Egypt**

An Egyptian media representative asked Putin about the time to revise the decision to close Egypt for Russian tourists. Putin responded that it was decided to stop air communication with Egypt after the crash of the Russian A321 airliner over Sinai. The decision was in no way related to the Egyptian leadership.

"It was not a political decision - it was connected with the need to protect our citizens. For the time being, the Egyptian authorities are not yet able to cope with the threat of terrorism. As soon as security is ensured, all restrictions will be lifted," Putin promised.

### **About state defense order**

A reporter asked Putin about the state of affairs with the national state defense order against the backdrop of declining oil prices.

"Freeze such projects is more expensive than implementing them further," Putin said.

"Even from the economic point of view, we should complete the projects that we are already running. All these projects were envisaged in the state arms program before 2020. Due to the fact that we have problems with the budget, due to the fallen oil prices and so on, we are forced not to launch some projects - we have to delay them to save our assets of today."

"The projects that we are starting - it is more profitable to finish them, rather than to stop them. For example, we started building a boat, a ship, an aircraft, an air defense system and invested money into it. To freeze these projects is more expensive than to finish them, because as soon as the funding stops, maintenance costs entail along with personnel salaries."

"All the tasks within the state defense order will be executed. Everything that has been started will be completed, if not in 2020, then in 2021. By 2022, all of our objectives that we set for ourselves within the framework of the state defense order, will be solved."

Regarding the investigation into the murder of Boris Nemtsov, Putin said that although Nemtsov was in opposition to the power, he "will never accept." his murder.

"About Boris Nemtsov. Our relationship with him was not always ill. He chose his path, he attacked, but I got used to it as he was not the only one. This is not a reason to kill. The perpetrators must be punished," Putin said.

After the press conference, Putin answered a question about his attitude to US presidential candidate Donald Trump.

Putin preferred not to give any assessment to his pre-election campaign, but he said that he welcomed Trump's readiness for developing relations with Russia if he wins the US presidential election.

"How can we say that we do not welcome it? Of course, we do. It is not our business to define his advantages, but he is the absolute leader of the presidential race. He is a bright man, a talented person, no doubt," Putin said.

Today's press conference has become the 11th one for Vladimir Putin. For the first time, the head of state held a Q&A session with journalists in 2001. As many as 1,390 journalists were accredited for the press conference with President Putin in 2015 - a record number in the history of such press conferences.

The President himself considers such Q&A meetings a good tradition. According to Putin, the head of state "should never evade responsibility, never take arbitrary decisions and be always involved in the lives of ordinary citizens."