

Beat: Politics

VLADIMIR PUTIN ANSWERS REGARDING TURKEY, RUSSIAN POSITION AND PARIS ATTACKS.

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USPA NEWS - Question: Mr President, experts have talked extensively about continuity in the Turkish presidency's agenda and the 2013 summit hosted by Russia in St Petersburg. Do you feel this continuity has been proven ?...

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First of all, we worked very actively within the framework of the G20 at the expert level back in St Petersburg to implement our suggestions related to preventing tax avoidance and tax base reduction. In Russia, we developed a whole set of measures and even passed a federal law on controlled foreign companies. This was within the framework of the agreements that were reached in St Petersburg.

At the expert level, we worked actively with OECD representatives and developed an action plan on this matter. And we talked about this now as well, noting that we must begin work to implement it. So in this regard, we see continuity in the Turkish presidency, as well as on issues of investments "" after all, we were just talking about this, particularly with regard to infrastructure projects.

Question: There has been much talk after the events in Paris that there may be fundamental changes, qualitative changes in the relations between Russia and the West. How do you feel about this? Have you seen any specific proof of this in your meetings, for example with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom today, or the President of the United States yesterday ?

Vladimir Putin: You know, we never renounced good relations with our partners in the East or the West. And the unilateral measures limiting our cooperation in various areas were initiated by our partners, not us. If our partners now feel that the time has come to somehow change our relations, we welcome this; we never renounced joint work or closed our doors. It did seem to me that "" at the expert level, at least "" at the level of discussing problems, there is clear interest in renewing work in many areas, including the economy, politics, and security.

Reply: Last year, many people stated that you were an outcast at the G20 summit among its leaders. This year, you are a player because of Syria. What do you think about this? Do you agree with this interpretation of the events ?

Vladimir Putin: Last year I already spoke about it. Our Australian colleagues created very good working conditions; everything was very good, without any problems. But it seems that somebody wanted to convey this idea you just stated to the public, that Russia was somehow isolated. Nothing like this happened.

As for the fact that I left a little earlier, I can let you in on a secret, I think I already spoke about this: I left due to technical reasons, so as not to wait in line to take off. That is all. It was a 14-hour flight to Moscow, so I simply needed to be the first to get on the plane. I know how the protocol services schedule flights, I would need to wait three hours to leave earlier, that's all.

There weren't any problems then or now, although naturally, relations were tenser than today. You can feel it, it's true. But life goes on, everything changes: new problems come up, new threats, new challenges, that are difficult to resolve on one's own, without others. We need to join forces.

Question: I'll return to the topic of terrorism.

There has been a series of tragic events throughout the world in the last month, in a range of locations: explosions in Bagdad,

preparations for bombings and terrorist attacks in Istanbul, a Russian plane crash (I know that there is no official version of what happened, but all the experts believe that the version of a terrorist attack cannot be excluded), and the recent horrible events in Paris.

France launched a massive attack, a military operation in Syria. At every meeting or big gatherings here, every leader spoke of the need to join forces. Do you feel it is possible to create a truly unified anti-terrorist coalition in these conditions? And what would it look like? Because everyone is talking about joining forces, but nobody is actually saying what parameters should be involved and how this coalition should look.

Vladimir Putin: Of course, I think that not only can it be done; it must be done. If you recall, I already spoke about this at the 70th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly. That is precisely what I said. And the tragic events that followed only confirmed that we were right.

As for how this should look: there is nothing difficult about it. We must organise specific work to prevent terrorist attacks and fight terrorism on a global scale. We also suggested engaging in anti-ISIS cooperation. Unfortunately, our partners in the United States initially refused. They simply sent a written note that said, 'We decline your suggestion.'

But indeed, life moves fast and often teaches us lessons. And I think that now, everyone is becoming aware that the only effective way to fight terrorism is to fight it together.

We never closed the doors to this cooperation. We feel that this cooperation can be established at a political level and at the level of the special services that must work together more actively, exchanging information, helping one another and warning one another of danger.

As for Syria, we must first decide “” and the foreign ministers are working on this now “” which groups we consider terrorist organisations, and which are simply armed but nevertheless a part of Syria’s healthy opposition, and focus our efforts on fighting the terrorist organisations specifically, in order to create conditions for a political settlement of the Syrian conflict.

Question: Mr President, you had a meeting with Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the summit. This was your first contact since the Turkish elections, where Erdogan and his party confirmed the status quo in Turkey’s political life. With regard to this, was it harder for you to talk with the Turkish side about, for example, Syria, and what will happen to projects like TurkStream or other energy projects that you agreed upon ?

Vladimir Putin: No, there were no difficulties. On the contrary, we can see some rapprochement. The President of Turkey is a straightforward, open person. He is a hard negotiator, but nevertheless, he is a man of experience and clearly strives to find a solution as well. So yesterday, he and I had a long conversation about our bilateral relations and about settling the Syrian crisis.

It seemed to me that we can find some common points that will allow us to achieve common success. First and foremost, this has to do with the fact that the President of Turkey, as he told me directly yesterday, feels that the Syrian crisis can only be resolved by political means, and we must create conditions for promoting this political process.

As for bilateral projects, I do not see any problems in general. We worked in the past, and continue to work on these issues. There are some problems and issues concerning trade, roughly speaking “” what came first, the chicken or the egg ?

What came first, the TurkStream project, its legal registration or the discounts on gas we supply to the Turkish market? Or was it the discounts first and then the legal registration?

In any case, Turkey is interested, as we were told, in maintaining and increasing the sales of our goods on its market, and in this case, we are talking about gas deals. And we looked at various options for resolving the issues that are of mutual interest to us.

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