

Russian Influence Operations in Washington

By Cliff Kincaid – June 23, 2014

Speaking to the U.S.-Russia Forum on June 16, 2014, the Russian Ambassador to Washington, [Sergei Kislyak](#), told the participants that there are “no ideological divides” between the U.S. and Russia. He said both countries were “market economies” with “democratic systems.” He called for increased U.S.-Russian cooperation and claimed that the Edward Snowden “affair”—the case in which the former CIA and NSA contract employee fled to Russia with highly classified documents—was “thrown on us,” as if the Russian intelligence service, the FSB, was caught flat-footed by his defection.

With such absurd and outrageous statements, Kislyak betrayed true Russian intentions, as well as major disinformation themes, that continue to confuse Western audiences. Officially, he spoke on “Russia Relations: Restoring a Constructive Agenda.”

The event, held in the Hart Senate Office Building in the nation’s capital, was a major exercise in Russian influence operations.



Kislyak

Politically, participants in the U.S.-Russia Forum included figures from the left, such as Stephen Cohen, a professor from New York University and Princeton University, and his wife, Katrina vanden Heuvel, the editor and publisher of The Nation magazine. But people also came from Pat Buchanan’s American Conservative magazine and the Ron Paul Institute.

In the past, the Russians could only count on support from the “progressive” side of the American political spectrum. Figures from the American conservative movement are now on the Putin bandwagon.

Alaska’s Republican Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell “talked about the need for cooperation with Russia despite disputes over Crimea and Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, which have brought U.S.-Russia relations to their lowest point in decades,” according to [a press release](#) from his office.

Treadwell is running for the Senate against former Alaska Attorney General Dan Sullivan and Joe Miller in the August 19 Republican primary.

Another speaker was Democrat Mark Ritchie, the secretary of state of Minnesota.

[Watch the video: Defending Russian Aggression Against Ukraine](#)

At US-Russia Forum, Cohen Sees Mounting Danger of Tactical Nuclear Warfare if Crisis Continues

Stephen Cohen “We are already in a New Cold War – potentially a Cold War more dangerous than the world barely survived...This Cold War may tempt the use of what are euphemistically called tactical nuclear weapons.”

Equally significant, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern arose from the audience during the question period to state that the U.S. had provoked Putin and had somehow violated the 1994 Budapest Memorandum by supporting Ukraine’s anti-communist government.

Responding, speaker Robert Legvold, a professor at Columbia University, said such an argument was “not plausible,” and plugged his article in Foreign Affairs on a “[New Cold War](#)” between the U.S and Russia. Unlike other speakers, such as Cohen, he did not excuse Russia’s aggression.

McGovern, an associate of Edward Snowden, had served as a CIA analyst from the administration of John F. Kennedy to that of George H. W. Bush. His bio says that his duties included chairing National Intelligence Estimates and preparing the President’s Daily Brief, and that he briefed one-on-one to President Ronald Reagan’s most senior national security advisers from 1981 to 1985.

It is apparent that McGovern’s “analysis” of Russian intentions, whatever it may have been, did not deter President Reagan from exposing and confronting the “Evil Empire.”

However, McGovern is today firmly on the Russian side.

The 1994 Budapest Memorandum, signed by the Russian government, was supposed to guarantee Ukraine's territorial integrity, in exchange for giving its Soviet nuclear weapons back to Moscow. Russia violated the agreement in a blatant fashion when it invaded Ukraine.

Kislyak's notion that the U.S. and Russia are comparable, in terms of democratic values, is, of course, completely absurd. In the U.S., journalists who expose the Obama administration can in extreme cases be harassed and intimidated, and sometimes even hauled into court. In Russia, by contrast, journalists and human rights activists who seek to expose the regime can be tortured and, in many cases, murdered. The U.S. allows pro-Moscow voices such as Russia Today (RT) to broadcast throughout the nation. The Kremlin suppresses and even outlaws dissident voices.

The 2013 State Department human rights report on Russia said that the regime has not brought to justice the individuals responsible for the deaths of prominent journalists, activists, and whistleblowers, such as [Sergey Magnitsky](#).

Magnitsky was the Russian attorney for businessman Bill Browder, who ran an investment fund in Russia called Hermitage Capital Management. He was [listed as a participant](#) in the U.S.-Russia Forum in 2003. In 2009, however, Magnitsky was imprisoned and then killed by Russian authorities after he uncovered official corruption involving the theft of \$230 million.

Browder himself became an "Enemy of the State" in Russia, and has been threatened with death. On the CBS "60 Minutes" program, [he said](#), "The Russian regime is a criminal regime. We're dealing with a nuclear country run by a bunch of Mafia crooks. And we have to know that."

That is why the attendance list at the event, provided to this columnist, is so interesting. With few exceptions, they were supporters of the Russian regime. The list constitutes a "who's who" of individuals, mostly in Washington, D.C. and New York, who can be counted on to promote the Russian line and more U.S.-Russian trade.

On the list we find several people from the Russian Orthodox Church. Other groups represented at the forum were involved in international trade with Russia. They included:

- The law firm Patton Boggs, which represented Gennady Timchenko, a Russian billionaire with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin (Reuters [reported](#) the Russian was seeking U.S. government financing to buy U.S. planes.)
- Dimtry Beskurnikov of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who is said to be the owner and manager at Russian American Trade & Investing Consulting, and a member of the Business Advisory Board at Eurasia Business Coalition
- Sergey Belyakov, Deputy Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation

In addition to these individuals, we find the following interesting names on the list:

- Umberto Pascali, who has written about how the Russians are preparing to dump the U.S. dollar as the world's currency
- Axel Tillman, who represents the U.S. arm, RVC-USA, of a Russia-backed venture capital firm
- Webster Tarpley, formerly of the Lyndon LaRouche organization.

Phillip Swarts, an investigative reporter at The Washington Times, [covered](#) the U.S.-Russian forum, emphasizing the Russian point of view.

The next phase of this process for putting in place a “constructive agenda for U.S.-Russia relations” is scheduled for September 7 - 9, 2014, in Moscow.

TV anchor: Russia can turn U.S. 'into radioactive dust'



Russian TV anchor Dmitry Kiselyov