

Putin Has Developed 'Immunity' to Criticism, Spokesman Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

April 14, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

President Vladimir Putin has developed a "strong immunity to rabid criticism" from the non-parliamentary political opposition and has never been guided in his actions by the possibility of provoking uproar in the West, his spokesman said in a televised interview.

Dmitry Peskov's comments, made on state-owned Russia 1 television on Sunday night, come amid strained ties between Russia and the U.S. over the recently published Magnitsky list and Russia's retaliatory blacklist of U.S. officials.

Speaking about everything from the opposition movement to escalating tensions with the U.S., Peskov described Putin as a "fierce" defender of Russia's national interests but also a "master of compromise."

Peskov said the president would not negotiate with the non-parliamentary political opposition, be tolerant toward sexual minorities or make concessions in foreign talks if

national interests were at stake, Interfax reported Monday.

Despite his unbending tactics, however, Peskov said Putin is a "very outer-directed" president and a "master of compromise" when Russia's national interests are not threatened.

"And this is a very paradoxical situation: being so outer-directed and so public as president, this is a person who still after all these years continues to prompt the question, 'Who is Mr. Putin?'" Peskov said.

If Putin refuses to cooperate with the "uncompromising" non-parliamentary political opposition, it is likely because the opposition has no "constructive agenda," the spokesman said.

As for the upcoming trial of political opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who has repeatedly called for Putin's ouster at large-scale rallies in Moscow since December 2011, Peskov said the president would not be following it.

"I don't think the president should follow any cases of citizens personally," he said.

Navalny is accused of organizing the theft of 16 million rubles (\$516,000) worth of timber from state-owned company KirovLes while serving as an unofficial aide to Kirov region Governor Nikita Belykh several years ago. He has denied wrongdoing, and his supporters say the case is politically motivated. He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted.

The anti-corruption activist has announced ambitions to one day become president and has said he would prosecute top Kremlin officials on suspicion of fraudulent use of state funds and other crimes.

Peskov responded to comparisons of the Navalny case with the ongoing corruption probe at the Defense Ministry by saying the lack of prosecution of senior officials in the Defense Ministry case simply means that investigators needed more time because the "scale of activities" at the ministry was larger.

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