

Ex-NATO Chief Condemns Russia-German Trade Talks

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Then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (R) escorts then Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (L) into the Pentagon on May 8, 2003. **U.S. Defense Department**

Former NATO chief **Anders Fogh Rasmussen** has condemned Germany for refusing to speaking out against Russia's role in the **Ukrainian conflict**.

German **Economic Minister Sigmar Gabriel** visited **Moscow** on Wednesday to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss trade. He was later slammed for not taking a stronger stand against Moscow's actions against Kiev.

Speaking to reporters **before the talks**, Gabriel said that he was in **favor of lifting EU sanctions against Russia**, but that the **international community** needed to see steps towards peace in Ukraine, **the Reuters news agency reported**.

The former NATO officer, who now works as an advisor to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, condemned Gabriel for being “more interested in trade deals than keeping the international pressure on Russia.”

“Regardless of what Russia does, no matter how serious its transgressions are, Mr. Gabriel seems committed to get the sanctions lifted at pretty much any price,” Rasmussen said.

Putin also used the talks to name Germany as “one of Russia's most important trade and economic partners.”

Trade between Russia and the European Union has been hard hit by sanctions and counter-sanctions between the two sides, imposed in 2014 in relation to the ongoing Ukrainian conflict.

Trade turnover between Moscow and Berlin fell to 40 percent in 2015, tumbling to 25 percent in the first half of 2016. As a whole, trade between the countries fell by 13.7 percent in the first six months of the year, Reuters reported.

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