

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

May 20, 2019



David Frenkel / Twitter

Bated breath

The Kremlin said it hopes a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump takes place, but that it has not received a definitive decision from Washington on the matter, Interfax reported.

"We know that Trump has spoken of his desire for a meeting," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was cited as saying. "[B]ut unfortunately we also know that [U.S. Secretary of State Mike] Pompeo did not bring any concrete proposals about organizing such a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Osaka."

Third again

Russia's Sergei Lazarev placed third in the 64th Eurovision Song Contest with a performance of "Scream," [repeating](#) his third-place finish in 2016.

Dutch singer-songwriter Duncan Laurence beat 25 other contestants in the grand finale in Tel Aviv, Israel, while Italy came second.

Embed:

☒☒ The winner of the Eurovision Song Contest 2019 is Duncan Laurence, representing The Netherlands with his song, Arcade!

☒ <https://t.co/8ppA7om1Py@dunclaurence#DareToDream #Eurovision #NLD pic.twitter.com/iVduYXZYoy>

— Eurovision (@Eurovision) [18 мая 2019 г.](#)

Agent's plea

Convicted Russian agent Maria Butina has filmed a video from an Oklahoma prison [asking](#) for financial assistance to help pay her legal fees.

Butina said her lawyer is filing an appeal of an April conviction after she pleaded guilty to conspiring with a Russian official to infiltrate a gun rights group and influence U.S. conservative activists and Republicans.

LGBT support

Police in St. Petersburg [detained](#) at least seven participants and supporters of an LGBT rally on the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

Mass gatherings have also been reported in the Russian cities of [Yaroslavl](#), [Krasnodar](#) and [Perm](#).

Embed:

Международный день борьбы с гомофобией в Петербурге
<pic.twitter.com/mFxYk7Xcwm>

— Dave Frenkel (@merr1k) [17 мая 2019 г.](#)

Laser future

Putin touted laser weapons' ability to enhance Russia's military capability "for decades ahead," mentioning the Peresvet, the military's first laser weapon that entered service last fall.

Other laser weapons under development have “until just recently only figured in science fiction,” he [told](#) top officials.

Crimean Tatars

Outgoing Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called on the new Ukrainian leadership to continue fighting for the Crimean peninsula, annexed by Russia, as Crimean Tatars marked the 75th anniversary of Soviet deportation.

The Deputy Prime Minister in the Moscow-backed Crimean Government and an ethnic Crimean Tatar, Ruslan Balbek, said he was glad that unlike previous years this time the day of remembrance did not develop into a “political farce.”

Austrian sting

Austria raced toward a snap election as Chancellor Sebastian Kurz pulled the plug on his coalition with the far right after its leader was caught on video offering to fix state contracts with a woman posing as a Russian oligarch's niece.

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The far-right Freedom Party's Heinz-Christian Strache resigned as vice chancellor and party leader after the video was released by two German news organizations. He acknowledged that the video was "catastrophic" but denied breaking the law.

Baring control

A court in Far East Russia has ordered private equity group Baring Vostok to give up control of a bank at the center of a dispute that led U.S. investor Michael Calvey to be detained on fraud charges.

The Blagoveshchensk court [directed](#) Baring to sell a 10-percent stake in Vostochny Bank, giving Kremlin-connected businessman Artyom Avetisyan and his partners control of the bank.

S-500 promise

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the purchase of S-400 defense systems from Russia was a done deal, adding that Ankara would also jointly produce S-500 defense systems with Moscow.

U.S. officials have called Turkey's planned purchase of the S-400 "deeply problematic," saying it would risk Ankara's partnership in the joint strike fighter F-35 program because it would compromise the jets, made by Lockheed Martin Corp.

Blame game

The United Nations said at least 18 health centers have been attacked in the past three weeks in northwestern Syria, prompting a confrontation between Western powers and Russia and

Syria at the Security Council over who is to blame.

Acting U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jonathan Cohen said Russia and Syria were responsible for the attacks. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the Syrian and Russian forces were not targeting civilians or civilian infrastructure and questioned the sources used by the United Nations to verify attacks on health centers.

Unceremonious welcome

At least two people poured feces on the head of Russia's Libertarian Party, Mikhail Svetov, as he arrived for a lecture in the central Russian city of Kazan.

Svetov [gave](#) the lecture after a 20-minute delay and said he hoped that security cameras had captured his assailants.

Embed:

Друзья! 19 мая я приезжаю с лекцией в Казань! Расскажу про санкцию агрессора, санкцию жертвы и пределы самообороны для либертарианца. Приходите, буду рад всех видеть! <https://t.co/CbjoQjc8oc>
<pic.twitter.com/Mhohtheck4>

— Mikhail Svetov (@msvetov) [14 мая 2019 г.](#)

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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