



I am the “US-based Kremlin intermediary” that tried to help Tucker Carlson book an interview with Putin



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Tucker Carlson accused the NSA of spying on his personal communications when he tried to schedule an interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin. I can corroborate his story.

On March 10, Fox News host Tucker Carlson **told** the Full Send podcast that the US government “broke into [his] text messages” in the summer of 2021, just months before the launch of Russia’s February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Carlson claimed the spying occurred as he was planning a trip to Russia, where he hoped to record a conversation with the country’s president. According to Carlson, he learned of the surveillance after a US government source arranged to meet him in Washington and proceeded to share information with him that only someone with access to his private, personal text messages could have known.

“This person’s like... ‘Are you planning a trip to go see Putin?’ This was the summer before the war started. And I was like, ‘how would you know that? I haven’t told anybody,’” Carlson recalled.

“I was intimidated,” he added. “I’m embarrassed to admit, but I was completely freaked out by it.”

Carlson’s interview with Full Send did not represent the first time he spoke publicly about the NSA’s surveillance of his private communications. On June 28, 2021, Carlson opened his primetime Fox News show with **a monologue accusing the Biden Administration of spying on his team**, disclosing that an NSA whistleblower had contacted him and “repeated back to us information about a story that we are working on that could have only come directly from my texts and emails.” At the time, he did not disclose specific details about the story in question.

“The NSA captured that information without our knowledge, and did it for political reasons,” the Tucker Carlson Tonight host declared, asserting his source informed him that the Biden Administration planned to “leak” his private texts “in an attempt to take this show off the air.”

Carlson’s colleagues at Fox proceeded to studiously **ignore his allegations**, while other mainstream news outlets **appeared to mock** the host for going public with the information. When anonymous NSA officials **announced** that an internal agency review found “no evidence” to support Carlson’s claims the following month, the corporate press **took them at their word**.

Amidst the NSA’s denials, however, a report surfaced that seemed to directly support Carlson’s narrative. On July 7, an **Axios “scoop”** cited unnamed US officials accusing the Fox host of “talking to U.S.-based Kremlin intermediaries about setting up an interview with Vladimir Putin shortly before [he] accused the National Security Agency of spying on him.”

Though the government officials who planted that story remain anonymous, I can confirm the identity of at least one of the “US-based Kremlin intermediaries” in question.

It was me. They lied.

“Strangely, I can not send my message of interest to talk to Mr. Carlson directly to him”

In April 2021, Tucker Carlson told me that he was trying to book an interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin, but that he kept running into roadblocks. Though Tucker knew I previously worked as an anchor and correspondent for the Russian government-funded news channel RT America in Washington DC, he was not asking for my assistance. In fact, I do not believe he even considered that I could help him book the interview in any way.

Regardless, I attempted to assist Tucker's pursuit of the interview through a senior Russian government contact. Ironically, the contact had not been established through my time at RT America, but my work as a correspondent for The Grayzone, the online outlet that has employed me since early 2019. The Grayzone is fully independent and not connected to Russia or any other government, financially or otherwise.

In July 2019, I traveled to Caracas, Venezuela, to cover a **high-level diplomatic meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement**. While in Caracas, I met Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergey Ryabkov and **interviewed him** for The Grayzone's YouTube channel. (Many of the predictions Ryabkov made, including that the US dollar would soon lose its significance in the global economy, are currently **playing out** as a direct result of US and European sanctions levied in response to the Ukraine war).

Having found his insights on international relations extremely relevant to my coverage of the emerging multi-polar world, I maintained occasional contact with Ryabkov over email in the months following our discussion. When Tucker told me that he was hoping to arrange an interview with Putin, I offered to connect him with Ryabkov.

I had met Tucker in July 2018, when we both covered President Trump's highly anticipated summit with his Russian counterpart in Helsinki, Finland. Though Tucker had been dispatched to the Finnish capital for an interview with Trump, I personally always believed that a far more interesting conversation would have resulted from an exchange between him and Putin (who was instead left to have a predictably hostile, largely forgettable encounter with Chris Wallace, then of Fox, now at CNN).

When Tucker expressed his desire to interview Putin three years later, I volunteered to put him in contact with Ryabkov by email so they could discuss his plan to visit Russia. I expected to write a basic introductory email, receive a standard "thank you" from both parties, and let Tucker's team manage communication from there.

Both Tucker and Ryabkov replied to my initial message within hours. Yet their digital exchange took an inexplicable turn.

On the evening of April 16, 2021, I sent a brief email introducing Ryabkov to Tucker. Tucker responded within minutes, informing Ryabkov that he planned to record shows in Russia in the summer of that year. Just over five hours later, Ryabkov replied that he would be happy to talk with Tucker and proposed time slots for a phone call the following week.

I assumed my role was done. Yet on April 20, I received a follow-up email from Ryabkov.

"Strangely, I can not send my message of interest to talk to Mr. Carlson directly to him. I tried it twice with no success," the diplomat informed me, before asking me to relay his message.

At the time, I did not think much of the issue. I thought that perhaps Tucker's email service, which was different than mine, had sent the note to spam, or that I had mistyped an email address. In retrospect, however, I should have been suspicious. Both Tucker and Ryabkov had received and replied to my initial message, meaning their respective addresses were typed correctly in the thread. And Ryabkov's email to Tucker wasn't going to spam - it was failing to deliver altogether.

The digital communication error between Ryabkov and Tucker was not a one-off event. Weeks later, on May 25, I received a message from Ryabkov's team explaining that Tucker had failed to reply to a yet another email. They kindly requested I ask Tucker if he had received their message. Once again, he had not.

Roughly one month later, Tucker informed me that a source inside the NSA had contacted him to warn that the US government had caught wind of his effort to interview Putin by spying on his electronic communications. Tucker went public with the story on June 28. As summarized above, virtually every single mainstream reporter, including those at Fox, trusted the denials of the US government rather than rally behind one of their own.

There are three points I must emphasize here. One: it is completely normal and routine for journalists to maintain contact with high-level government sources, domestic or otherwise. Two: it is also normal and routine for journalists to share those connections with trusted colleagues and friends. Three: at the time, I genuinely believed that a Tucker-Putin interview would have moved us closer to peace. Instead, we are currently positioned on the brink of nuclear war.

Oh, and the obligatory fourth point: I am absolutely *not* a Kremlin operative or "intermediary." I have no relationship with the Kremlin, and I have not accepted financial support from any state or state-sponsored organization since my departure from RT America in December 2018. Even then, my "relationship" with the Russian government was completely transparent. Would anyone suggest that US or British citizens employed by Al Jazeera, for example, are representatives of the Emir of Qatar? I worked for RT America because they gave me an opportunity to cover the actions of my own country at home and abroad from a perspective that domestic, corporate-run networks would have never allowed. When that reality changed (paradoxically thanks to US, not Russian, government interference), I walked out – but that's a story for another day.

In truth, even my "Russian" forename is simply a product of the fact that my Indian-American father and American mother could not agree on anything else to call me. So why did US government sources characterize me as a Kremlin intermediary? Do they have any evidence to formally accuse me of being such? Or did they simply dump that information on an unquestioning Axios reporter without even offering them my name?

The answer to the second question is of course, no. The answer to the third: probably. As for the first? Clues can be found in the more recent effort to tarnish Tucker's reputation through legal machinations and the selective leaking of his private text messages.

Target: Tucker

In March 2021, Dominion Voting Systems filed a \$1.6 billion defamation lawsuit against Fox News on the basis that it incurred financial damages as a result of the network's coverage of the 2020 Presidential Election. Though Tucker is not named in the suit, last year a judge allowed Dominion to seize the Fox host's private text messages. Within months, the contents of Carlson's personal texts had made their way to the [pages of the Washington Post](#).

Curiously, coverage of Carlson's private messages has so far focused on a single comment he made about former President Trump – not Dominion Voting Systems. Earlier this month, mainstream outlets seized on a January 2021 text the Fox host sent one of his producers in which he claimed to “passionately” hate the former president. The story represented an obvious attempt to drive a wedge between Carlson and Trump just before the the 2024 presidential election season officially heats up.

Whether such tactics will succeed in undermining Carlson and Trump's relationship is a question only they can answer. It is worth noting, however, that Carlson consistently attempted to reorient Trump toward his “America First” agenda throughout the latter's time in the White House, using his show to offer principled critiques of the former president's decision to [bomb Syria](#), [escalate regime change operations against Venezuela](#), and [assassinate Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani](#). In June of 2019, Carlson [personally persuaded Trump to reject the advice of his national security team](#) and elect not to retaliate against Iran over its decision to shoot down a US drone that had violated its sovereign airspace. The Fox host's actions not only averted a deadly US military strike on Iran, but a potential regional war.

For anyone who values peace and diplomatic engagement over military conflict, Carlson's influence over Trump – and the US public, for that matter – must be regarded as positive. Perhaps that is why the press, including his colleagues at Fox, have refused to publicly denounce the US government's selective targeting of Tucker. After all, aside from a handful of Fox News hosts who have attempted to cop his anti-interventionist style, the mainstream media are in virtual lockstep when it comes to inciting continued US involvement in the Ukraine conflict.

Tucker is by far the most popular US media figure to consistently denounce Washington's escalations in the Ukraine battle, articulate the looming reality of World War III, and sound the alarm over the threat of global nuclear war. As if such positions did not threaten powerful forces enough already, last December he even dedicated a lengthy show open to investigating the murder of President John F. Kennedy, revealing a source with “direct knowledge” of classified information told him the CIA [did in fact have a hand in the assassination](#).

Though the campaign to cancel Tucker is largely framed in terms of the culture wars and partisan debate over the events of January 6, it is substantially driven by neoconservative interventionists seeking to muzzle the pro-war Uniparty's single greatest foe. If the Dominion lawsuit succeeds in [bankrupting Fox](#), or even casting Tucker as the network's scapegoat, it will have succeeded in punishing the media's pre-eminent opponent of the escalating Ukraine proxy war.

Which brings us back to the question: why did US government sources characterize me as a “Kremlin intermediary” while feeding a “journalist” information about Tucker's private texts back in July 2021? The answer is simple: US officials weaponized my mere

existence, through innuendo, in order to suggest Tucker was involved with Kremlin agents. By undermining his credibility, they aimed to invalidate his character and by extension, his anti-war positions.

Beyond the financial threat it poses to Fox, the Dominion suit similarly aims to discredit Tucker. And politics aside, it poses a major threat to the First Amendment.

What does the fact that a corporation can sue a media organization over critical coverage, allege financial damage, and gain access to a journalist's private texts say about a society that claims to value a free press? If Dominion is able to target a company as powerful as Fox in such a manner, what does that mean for those of us who challenge corporate and government interests in independent media? Why aren't more journalists asking these questions?

And finally, if the Fox-obsessed Beltway press corps is truly so concerned with holding journalists accountable for "knowingly lying" to the public, there is no shortage of willful deceptions to reckon with. After all, this week marks 20 years since the launch of the US military campaign in Iraq, a catastrophic war that was directly **enabled by lies** its greatest cheerleaders in the press still **repeat to this day**.