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## **RUSSIA DISMISSES TRUMP WIRETAPPING CLAIMS AS DOMESTIC ISSUE**

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CNBC (06 March 2017)

Claims by President Donald Trump that his phones were wiretapped by his predecessor, Barack Obama, during the 2016 election campaign are a purely domestic matter for the United States, the spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday.

The claim came amid revelations about contacts between Trump aides and Russia's ambassador to the U.S., both during and after an election that U.S. intelligence agencies alleged Russia had meddled in.

When asked about Trump's allegations, made without evidence on Twitter, Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the Kremlin "should not be in any way linked to U.S. domestic issues" and "doesn't have the slightest inclination or intention to be associated with these affairs."

In the past, Russian officials have come to Trump's defense, decrying his opponents for resisting efforts to improve relations between Washington and Moscow.

Trump has been dogged for months by questions about his campaign's ties to Russia. Disclosures about contacts with Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak cost Michael Flynn his job as national security adviser.

Flynn's resignation became a watershed moment for Russian officials. State media in recent weeks has switched from detailed coverage of Trump to largely ignoring the U.S. turmoil around his perceived ties to Russia.

State media last week largely ignored the questions surrounding Attorney General Jeff Sessions' contacts with Kislyak.

Well into the second half of his almost two-hour program Sunday night on the state-controlled Rossiya channel, commentator Dmitry Kiselyov blamed the mainstream U.S. media for not allowing Trump even to talk about improving ties with Russia.

"We're witnessing a massive battle in the U.S. right now: the oligarch media against the U.S. president and his new administration," he said. "He is afraid not just to raise his head and talk about Russia — he's afraid to utter the very word, and for the members of his team any mention of Russia is a high political risk."

Kiselyov also suggested that "intransigent radical liberals" who oppose Trump are "plotting a revolution" against the U.S. president.

Popular publications also indicated that Russia's infatuation with Trump is waning.

An opinion piece in Monday's Moskovsky Komsomolets by Vladimir Solovyov, a co-author on a book on Trump, was accompanied by an illustration of Trump's shadow stealing the torch from the Statue of Liberty and leaving behind a clown's red nose on her face.

Solovyov decried Trump's opponents but also criticized the president for branding leading media outlets as "enemies of the people."

"A democratically elected president has to look for compromise with enemies and govern together with the opposition. Political solitude □ this is what is looming and threatening the president," he wrote.

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