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No...Putin's Largest Fish Was Caught In The White House

It's apparent that Russian President Vladimir Putin was actually being uncharacteristically modest last week photographed posing with a huge 46 pound pike he caught in Siberia. If he had really wished to show off his superior angling ability he could have featured a much larger fish he reeled in here in America.

Putin made his prowess clear the following day, granting American secret information-thief fugitive Edward Snowden a one-year asylum in Russia despite numerous White House requests for his return. Attorney General Eric Holder had even pleaded to his Russian counterpart, Alexander Kononov that the U.S. wouldn't seek the death penalty or (gasp) torture if they would please, pretty please, send our wayward son back to his forgiving country.



This picture made available on July 26, 2013 shows Russian President Vladimir Putin holding a huge pike fish, after he caught it in the Tyva region on July 20, 2013 during his vacation. (Image credit: AFP/Getty Images via @daylife)

Given that Russia has predictably accessed all of the classified information in Snowden's possession, these denials appear to be guided by one primary intent...namely to proudly display the leader of a nemesis superpower as but another grand trophy.

Then there's the matter of contempt and scorn demonstrated when the Russian military dispatched their flagship guided-missile warship to Cuba. On July 26 their Black Sea Fleet spokesman [told Interfax-Avn](#) : "The cruiser *Moskva* and the large seagoing tanker *Bubnov* set off for Havana on the fourth week of their long-distance deployment", adding that it conducted the test launch of a cruise missile along the way.

U.S. officials have declared that the visit to Cuba is part of a push by Moscow to boost relations with communist Cuba in the military, energy and transportation sectors. As a princely perk, Prime Minister Medvedev announced that Moscow is cancelling most of Cuba's Soviet-era debt, estimated at close to \$30 billion.

It is also believed that the Russia-Cuba collaboration agenda includes renewed

electronic spying from a large Soviet-era intelligence facility at Lourdes near Havana. Located less than 100 miles off Key West, the facility will be capable of intercepting most communications in the southeastern U.S.

Golly, Can't We All Just Get Along?

After all, it isn't as if President Obama hadn't made every effort to go along with Putin's demands in order to get along. So where's all the gratitude and respect? It certainly isn't evidenced as the world witnesses a scandal-plagued administration apparently surprised that Barry's recent chummy photo-op exchanges yucking it up with Vlad at the G-8 meetings in Northern Ireland didn't bring Snowden back.

When Putin was asked earlier during a news conference in Finland about the Snowden affair, he simply smiled and [said](#), *"I myself would prefer not to deal with these issues. It's like giving a baby pig a haircut: there's a lot of squealing, but there's little wool."* He added: *"He has not crossed the state's border, and therefore does not need a visa. And any accusations against Russia [of aiding him] are ravings and rubbish."*

Putin simply explained that Russia has no extradition treaty with the United States and suggested that Moscow would expel Snowden only if he were a criminal. Speaking in the presidential residence with Finnish President Sauli Niinistö beside him, Putin said *"Thank God, Mr. Snowden committed no crimes on the territory of the Russian Federation."*

At a news conference in Saudi Arabia, Secretary of State John Kerry said that while it's true that the U.S. doesn't have an extradition treaty with Russia, Moscow should comply with common law practices between countries where fugitives are concerned. [He said](#), *"I would simply appeal to calm and reasonableness. We would hope that Russia would not side with someone who is a fugitive from justice."* Kerry reminded the Russians that the U.S. has returned seven crime suspects *"that they wanted"* in the past few years.

So much for that "reasonableness".

Then there was that time just a couple of days after Christmas when Putin signed into law a ban on adoptions of Russian children by U.S. citizens. That action abrogated a bilateral agreement which went into force in the previous month. The ban was rushed through the Russian parliament after our Congress passed the Magnitsky Act, which prohibits Russian human-rights abusers from visiting or banking in the U.S.

Restart Off to a Startling New START

And where's all that famous spirit of "restart" cooperation with Russia we were told to expect? Remember when the president was caught during global nuclear summit talks in Seoul on camera with an open mike assuring Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that he would have "more flexibility" to deal with contentious issues like missile defense after the November election? Dutifully, Medvedev said he would relay the message to then- incoming President Putin.

Well, he did get that flexibility, and as a concession to Russia, has delayed funding for ground-based interceptor (GBI) missile and radar sites the U.S. promised to install in Poland and the Czech Republic for defense against Iranian missile launchers. Remarkably, Obama informed our loyal NATO allies, the Poles, of his decision to renege on our commitment to provide missile defense protection for former Soviet satellite states from a belligerent Russia with a midnight phone call on September 17,

2009, the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion. He claimed at the time that he had a better plan.

Then, last March, he scuttled that “better plan” when Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced cancellation of the fourth and last phase of an Eastern Europe missile shield program...which, by the way, would also offer defense to U.S. territory from Iranian missiles. The fourth phase would have included the development of a SM-3IIB interceptor, an advanced version of a missile now carried aboard our Aegis missile defense warships. The three earlier phases are targeted on missiles aimed solely at Europe.

Incidentally, Russia is now completing construction of a large Armavir radar station in the Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad to detect missiles launched from Europe and Iran. That Baltic Sea site is where Moscow originally threatened to deploy advanced Iskander short-range nuclear-capable missiles if the Bush administration went forward with plans to deploy those ground-based interceptors in Poland and Romania, along with missile defense radars in the Czech Republic. You know... the ones that the Obama administration is withholding so that Moscow will politely agree to match with mutual defense cutbacks.

Meanwhile, Armavir, one of four advanced missile defense radars built by Russia in recent years, is being rushed into service by 2020. Each can track up to 500 objects simultaneously. Three stations are already deployed near St. Petersburg and in the Irkutsk region of Siberia. All are protected by highly advanced Russian long-range S-400 air defense and anti-missile interceptors.

But according to the Russian Foreign Ministry, we’re still not doing nearly enough to earn their love. Following Hagel’s pledge to indefinitely postpone phase four of the Eastern Europe shield deployment, they [issued a statement](#) criticizing the Pentagon for continuing “*to maintain a course toward strengthening its system of global missile defense and raising its effectiveness.*”

Meanwhile, Russia is illegally expanding their global missile reach. They recently tested their Yars-M ballistic missile in violation of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The INF accord prohibits America and Russia from development, testing or processing ballistic or cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. Russia may get around this by claiming they’re really longer-range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that will replace older weapons.

President Putin said on June 19 that some of Russia’s “neighbors” (a reference to primarily to China) are also developing INF missiles, and suggested that Moscow won’t let the INF Treaty hinder its strategic arms build-up. China isn’t a party to the INF. In addition, Russia also plans to provide anti-ship missiles and ground-to-air missile systems to Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime, presenting a particular threat to Israel.

While eliminating a vital part of the Eastern Europe missile shield, our commander-in-chief has also mothballed or killed several important U.S. defense development programs. This has included a scale-back of the Airborne Laser program to enable enemy missile interceptions during their early launch phase, along with the elimination of the Multiple Kill Vehicle and Kinetic Energy Interceptor which uses small warheads on a single rocket to handle decoys and offer a better chance of success.

Planned replacement of the Ohio-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine has also been delayed, and no decision has yet been made regarding whether the U.S. next-

generation strategic bomber force will even be capable of carrying nuclear weapons. In the meantime, Russia is reportedly building a new Borei-class submarine capable of launching 16 long-range nuclear Bulva missiles. They will also deploy a permanent naval unit in the Mediterranean Sea beginning this year, and a new strategic bomber which will be ready by 2020.

Naiveté Gone Nuclear

In mid-April, White House National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon delivered a still-secret letter from President Obama to President Putin during a meeting in Moscow. Putin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters that the correspondence “*addresses problems of military policy, including the missile defense and nuclear arsenals issues.*”

Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces recently confirmed that the war plan is nearly complete and “*is likely to recommend significant further U.S. nuclear force reductions*”. He observed that “*As the stockpile shrinks in size, we have reached the point where further reductions take on immense importance to the nation’s security.*”

At the same time, a facility which is essential for modernization to extend the life of our aging ballistic nuclear warheads has now been delayed for at least five years, and some believe, permanently. On the other hand, Russia, which maintains the world’s largest nuclear arsenal, continues to modernize and upgrade theirs. This advancement is occurring as Russia prepares to field its new generation of intercontinental ballistic missiles, including one type that can carry up to 15 warheads.

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon (R-Calif.) expressed alarm that nuclear arms reduction discussions with Russia are even on the table. Responding to Obama’s mention of the topic in a June 19 Berlin speech, he [commented](#): “*The president’s desire to negotiate a new round of arms control with the Russians, while Russia is cheating on a major existing nuclear control treaty, strains credulity.*”

On top of all of this, in yet another olive branch offered to Russia to get a “New START” agreement started, the Obama administration proposes to deactivate one-third of the U.S. nuclear arsenal unilaterally, and without seeking congressional approval. Retired Air Force Lt. General Thomas McInerney [characterized this action as](#) “*the most dangerous thing I have ever seen an American president attempt to do. This is not the time to embark on such a dangerous path, with China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea increasing their nuclear forces.*”

Current head of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, four-star Adm. Cecil E.D. Haney, the nominee to become the next commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, told Senate members at his July 30 nomination hearing that he would oppose unilateral reduction. Adm. Haney emphasized that nuclear modernization is “*even more critical*” for the aging U.S. arsenal as New START reductions are carried out. [He said](#): “*It is so important that we have a secure and safe and effective nuclear deterrent, and that the industrial base supports that.*”

So now we will all have to wait to find out what President Obama will propose to his new best pal Vladimir on arms control when they meet at the September G-20 Summit in St. Petersburg. The level of suspense is exhilarating, comparable no doubt to the excitement Nancy Pelosi expressed while waiting to find out what goodies

were in the ObamaCare legislation grab bag the Democrat-controlled Senate passed without reading it.

In the meantime, you can bet that President Putin is plenty anxious too. After all, didn't President Obama "restore America's standing in the world"? During a 2009 CNN interview [he said](#): "*We've seen very specific areas of cooperation around the nuclear issue. At the time of my inauguration, the world community was still divided on what Iran's intentions were...We mobilized the international community. You now have validators like the International Atomic Energy Agency, you've got the P-5 plus one, which includes Russia and China, all saying to Iran, you're on the wrong side of history here.*"

And if you like that whopper, you should hear the hilarious fish story Putin is laughing about.

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