
SERBIA'S VUCIC VOWS TO PRESERVE RUSSIA TIES

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On Thursday he confirmed that a video of a Russian spy bribing a former Serbian army officer was authentic.

The president followed a meeting of the National Security Council over a YouTube video, posted on November 18, showing Lieutenant Colonel Georgy Kleban, an ex-military envoy at the Russian embassy in Belgrade, handing a bag of cash to an unnamed, retired Serbian army officer.

The US has accused Russia of trying to destabilise Europe and urged Serbia to take action.

Moscow claims western powers are trying to discredit Russia and increase pressure on Serbia to cut its political, military and economic ties with its ethnic brothers in Russia amid a wider struggle for Balkan influence.

We are concerned about reports of improper Russian interference in Serbia. The United States supports Serbias efforts to investigate the incident and urges the government to hold those responsible for these illegal activities accountable, a US State Department spokesman told the media.

The video shows the Serbian lieutenant colonel, identified only as VK, count money from the bag in his car.

Serbia is seeking European Union membership but has remained a close ally of Russia, and has vowed to remain militarily neutral, despite most of its Balkan neighbours joining Nato.

Russia has supplied tanks and fighter aircraft to Belgrade in recent years and last month sent troops and high-tech equipment to Serbia for a joint military exercise. Vucic confirmed the purchase of Russias Pantsir air-defence system.

Vucic said Serbia was a target of fierce intelligence activities from Austria, Germany, Bulgaria and other countries.

I have one question for our Russian friends, Vucic said. Why?

Serbia has not imposed sanctions on Russia over its seizure of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and never voted against Russia in the United Nations.

Kleban was no longer in Serbia, Vucic said.

As far as we are concerned, we wont change our policy toward Russia, we see it as a friendly and brotherly country, the president said.

Vucic, who is due to visit Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on December 4, said he did not believe his Russian counterpart was aware of the spying incident.

On November 20, the head of analytics at Serbias Security Intelligence Agency (BIA), Relja Zeljski, said it was undoubtedly established that a Russian agent is in the video.
<https://www.eurasiatimes.org/en/25/11/2019/serbias-vucic-vows-to-preserve-russia-ties/>

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