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# The avatar of the Russian security services is winning over American audiences



Russia has been enthusiastic about the **interview** of Pavel Durov, founder and CEO of the Telegram and VKontakte platforms, with Tucker Carlson.

It enabled Russia to utilise the American journalist and sell Pavel Durov, an avatar of Russian intelligence, to the US audience.

In its propaganda action towards the US, Russia is more sophisticated now than in 2015–2016.

Russia is now avoiding categorical and pretty straightforward proclamations such as “Trump is ours”. These days, the Kremlin is craftier.

In 2015 and a few years later, Russia tolerated and even approved aggressive methods of its various propaganda mouthpieces targeting Russian domestic audiences with slogans indicating that Trump’s presidency was good for Russia. It was good, but Russia has changed its code of conduct.

The Kremlin realised that Russia’s domestic messages had an impact on a Western conservative audience that Russia had not anticipated and thus made several adjustments.

Now Russia wants Trump to win the elections but **announced** that it wanted Biden to win, knowing what American conservatives wanted to hear coming from Moscow.

This time, with regards to Pavel Durov, Russia’s domestic public domain is either full of glorification of Durov’s alleged brilliance or a few trusted propagandists or bloggers criticising Pavel Durov for his most definitely fake sympathy towards the Russian opposition.

## Durov is not the opposition

Pavel Durov is neither the Russian opposition nor neutral. On the contrary, Durov’s enterprise exists for the benefit of the Kremlin.

Those Russians who are in the Russian

internet business know something about Durov’s background and his 2 IT projects, VKontakte and Telegram, and the 2 well-known jokes about Pavel Durov and his IT business:

- Kremlin’s smart boy.
- Telegram’s servers located at the Lubyanka Building (the main building of FSB in the centre of Moscow).

Why is Pavel Durov Kremlin’s smart boy?

Not just because his first IT project, VKontakte was affiliated with various businessmen from Saint Peterburg tied to businessmen from Vladimir Putin’s orbit.

And not just because Pavel Durov’s VKontakte enabled users to share and post music soundtracks by Russian musicians and, while doing so, violated the rights of Russian musicians. Surprisingly, though, VKontakte had avoided any charges of violations.

This feature with music at Durov’s VKontakte was the most popular one among young Russians.

### When Igor Sechin wants something, he gets it for free

And not just because Igor Sechin, Vladimir Putin’s sidekick and head of the Russian government-controlled “Rosneft” oil company, was surprisingly willing to pay hundreds of millions of dollars for VKontakte to Pavel Durov.

It is well known that Mr Sechin has the power and authority not to pay but to take the assets he wants free of charge. When Igor Sechin wants something, he gets it for free.

It is still unclear if the previous asset owner, oligarch Vladimir Yevtushenkov, is under house arrest or in prison, as is Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Igor Sechin took away Vladimir Yevtushenkov’s assets, much like he did with Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

## How did Durov's platforms end in Iran?

Guess which foreign country was one of the first places Pavel Durov went with his Telegram? It was Iran.

Years ago, Pavel Durov criticised American agencies, particularly the FBI, claiming they were after him. Noticeably, Durov avoided being in the American Silicon Valley, the global Mecca of IT business.

Even though just about all Russian politicians and state-owned propaganda mouthpieces have the so-called Telegram channels, at one point Russia faked an attempt to block Telegram in Russia.



*Paul Manafort, Donald Trump's former head of the campaign, used Telegram back in 2015–2016. His associate Konstantin Kilimnik's affiliation with Russian intelligence was proven years ago*

As a result of that blocking attempt, almost the entire Russian protest audience was convinced that Telegram was more secure than WhatsApp.

Moreover, the Ukrainian audience also wrongly concluded that Telegram was safer and more trustworthy than WhatsApp.

Paul Manafort, Donald Trump's former head of the campaign, used Telegram back in 2015–2016. His associate Konstantin Kilimnik's affiliation with Russian intelligence **was proven** years ago and confirmed by the Mueller report.

Of course, Telegram servers are not physically located at the Lubyanka building, but Telegram communications are most definitely available to Russian agencies.

## Digital tool for circumventing sanctions

For quite a while, Pavel Durov was in Dubai, the region now sensitive to Russia's efforts to avoid and fight Western sanctions.

Pavel Durov's financial capabilities as well as the forthcoming release of a Telegram e-wallet in conjunction with Pavel Durov's cryptocurrency would not disrupt the market fundamentally but would enable Russia to use Durov's infrastructure and initiate some global payments and settlements.

It is difficult to determine what objective the Kremlin tried to achieve by introducing conservative American circles to Pavel Durov and his Telegram.

This might be about the forthcoming American elections. It could also relate to the need to use Durov's platform as a payment method for incentives and other disbursements in America.

**Pavel Durov spoke about pluralism, not taking anyone's side, and about everything American conservatives and isolationists wanted to hear**

The fact that Durov criticised the FBI during the interview with Tucker Carlson will be welcomed in at least some conservative circles, making it super hard to ban Telegram in America, in case the American government determined that Telegram, just as TikTok was affiliated with American foreign agencies.

Pavel Durov spoke about pluralism, not taking anyone's side, and about everything American conservatives and isolationists wanted to hear. Just take a look at Pavel Durov and ask

yourself:

How could this young boy with a Western appearance and good English manage to successfully launch his product in a fundamentally religious and authoritarian Iran without significant support from Russian intelligence? There is no way!

That is because Pavel Durov is just an avatar of Russian intelligence. Not the only avatar, of course. Russian intelligence has numerous different avatars. Pavel Durov is just one of them.

This very same Russian intelligence is now injecting Durov's avatar and his Telegram platform into the audience of Tucker Carlson. The question is: why?