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Steven Lee Myers Former New York Times Russian Bureau Chief

Steven Lee Myers is now a correspondent in the Washington Bureau of The New York Times who covers foreign policy and national security issues. He worked as bureau chief in Moscow in 2013 and 2014, and previously served there as a correspondent and bureau chief from 2002 to 2007, covering Russia and the other former Soviet republics. Mr. Myers is the author of the critically acclaimed biography of Vladimir Putin, *The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin*, published by Knopf in 2015.

Mr. Myers began his career at The Times in 1989 and worked in New York City until moving to Washington in 1996, where he covered first the State Department and then the Pentagon through the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001.

He has reported on conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Iraq. In 2003, he was “embedded” with the Army’s Third Infantry Division in Iraq during the invasion and reported extensively on the division’s experience there and back home that year. He returned to Iraq as a correspondent and later bureau chief from 2009 to 2011.

Subject Area/Topic: Vladimir Putin

Highlights: Myers started with a description of Putin’s rise to power. When Vladimir Putin was appointed prime minister by Boris Yeltsin in 1999, almost nobody knew who he was, even in the Soviet Union. Putin was born in 1952 in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). Mr. Myers described several influential events in his background including the severe wounding of his father in the Battle of Leningrad in World War II, his KGB experience including five years in East Germany, and his six years working with Anatoly Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg.

Putin and many Russians still see the world in Cold War or even imperial terms. So, countries like Ukraine are considered by them as part of Russia in some sense. Mr. Myers believes Putin does not see his incursions in Eastern Europe as expansion but more of a “retaking.”

Mr. Myers commented on several demographic issues including the fact that Russia’s population has been dropping for most of the last thirty years due to a low birth rate and emigration. He also noted there seem to be fewer women and minorities in official policy positions now than in the Soviet era. In discussing the Russian “oligarchs” of the 1990s, Mr. Myers said that all of them are dead, in prison or in exile. The wealthy Russians of today are all cronies of Putin and have no intention of challenging him politically. Putin’s governmental inner circle is also composed of old cronies, mostly men who went to KGB school with him in 1975.

Mr. Myers said he doesn’t think any of the current U.S. Presidential candidates will have an easy time dealing with Vladimir Putin.