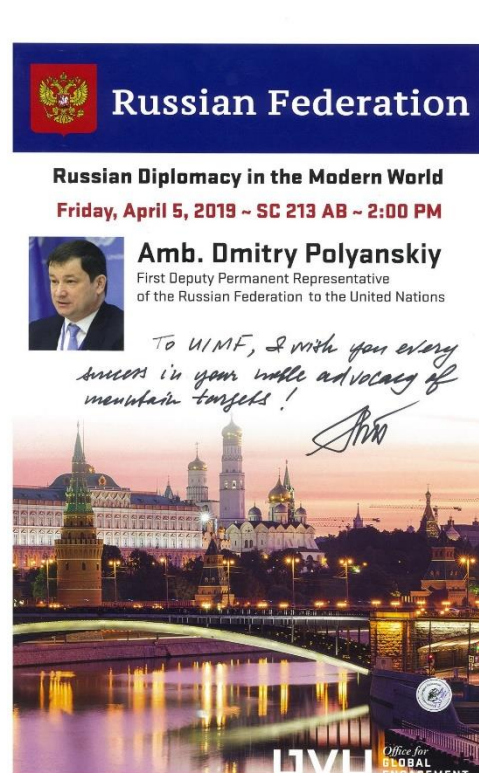


Russian Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy Speaks to Utah Valley University Students and Faculty



On 5 April 2019, the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy, visited Utah Valley University to speak with students and faculty about Russia's recent actions and policies. The students and professors who attended got direct insights into Moscow's logic and motivations. Ambassador Polyanskiy conducted the seminar in a rather unique way by giving just a few short opening remarks about Russian goals and intentions for the future, and then opened the rest of the session up for questions and answers.

While the students who posed questions to Ambassador Polyanskiy did so in a respectful manner and the Ambassador responded in an equally civil and respectful way, there was of

course some underlying tension as the issues discussed represented the very different ideological policies and beliefs of the United States and of Russia. Among the issues discussed were Russia's official position on the unrest in the Donbass/Donetsk areas of Ukraine and Russia's reasons for supporting Venezuela's sitting president Nicolas Maduro. Ambassador Polyanskiy reiterated the traditional Moscow claim that any Russian action taken in Ukraine is solely to protect the rights of Russian people living in Ukraine, and that the issue is largely a domestic Ukrainian problem that the world "has tried to attribute to Russian aggression". The Ambassador further explained Moscow's logic for supporting President Maduro, a man who has presided over Venezuela's worst economic and food and water crisis in years.

'Russia does not support Maduro, Russia supports Venezuela,' the Ambassador explained, "and according to the Venezuelan constitution, the rightful president is Mr. Maduro." While Western countries and most other countries- 54 governments in total- recognize Juan Guaido as the acting President in Venezuela, Russia contends that Mr. Guaido is someone who came off the streets and announced himself as leader just because the current one was doing a bad job. When asked about the purpose of the 300 Russian mercenaries reportedly sighted in Venezuela, Ambassador Polyanskiy asked if the student was thinking about 300 mercenaries or the 300 Spartan soldiers, because 300 operatives can not and will not overthrow Venezuela.

The Ambassador's overarching point that he reiterated to the crowd several times was 'to not believe everything you see and hear on the news. Take in information from many different sources and make critical judgments. And that advice, regardless of whether it's coming from a Moscow, Washington, Beijing, or Stockholm diplomat, is advice worth taking.

Joseph Lloyd, UIMF Director of Global Operations