

Author to glimpse inside Russian strongman Putin

Who: Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution and author of 'Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin'

What: "Vladimir Putin: The KGB President" talk

When: 6:30 p.m. Monday

Where: Teton County Library

How much: Free

By Kelsey Dayton

When you think of U.S. foreign relations, it's likely that Russia comes to mind. And you can't think of Russia and foreign policy without also thinking of Vladimir Putin.

Yet few people know much about Putin beyond his ties to the KGB, said Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution.

Hill, author of "Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin," will give a free talk Monday at Teton County Library, a talk sponsored in part by the Russian Club and the Jackson Hole Center for Global Affairs.

Hill's talk, "Vladimir Putin: The KGB President," will include why she wrote the book and some of its key findings about Putin.

Hill, who wrote the book with Clifford Gaddy, an economist specializing in Russia, has a background in Russian studies.

All of the research and writing about Putin seemed to have something missing, Hill said of why she and Gaddy set out to write their book. There wasn't an explanation of how he became an effective political operator in Russian government. He seemingly suddenly popped up at the top of the Russian po-

litical pyramid, she said. When he first became president he quickly became a popular leader, despite his lack of acceptance from outsiders, Hill said.

"For many people, the U.S.-Russian relationship is quite perplexing," Hill said.

A big part of that is Putin. He was the only leader who was entirely a product of the KGB, the Soviet secret police. He wasn't a political appointee but a career



Hill

officer before becoming a political figure, Hill said. Yet there is more to him than just the KGB. He's complex, and people need to understand that if they want to understand Russian politics, she said.

The talk at the library will be a chance for those with an interest in Russian politics and Putin to learn more, but also will serve as an important introduction to those with no background in the subject, Hill said.

Jackson is a world away from Russia, but people in the community are engaged globally, Hill said. Learning about Russia is important in a global economy.

"Russia is inescapably part of the bigger picture for us," Hill said. "It's one of the key relationships the U.S. has to figure out and navigate and to navigate that relationship right now means dealing with Mr. Putin."