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Dutch Apologize to Moscow for Detention of Russian Diplomat

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The Dutch foreign minister apologized to Moscow on Wednesday for the detention of a Russian diplomat in The Hague, saying his right to diplomatic immunity had been violated.

Russian Embassy officials said Dutch police entered the diplomat's home, beat him with a baton and illegally detained him for several hours last weekend. President Vladimir Putin demanded an apology from the Dutch for the incident.

"This is a crude violation of the Vienna Convention. We are expecting clarifications, apologies and the punishment of those guilty," Putin said from Bali, where he was taking part in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

The incident occurred at a time when Moscow and The Hague were already at odds over the detention in Russia of Greenpeace activists, including two Dutch citizens.

According to one analyst, the two incidents were directly related.

Fyodor Lukyanov, chief editor of Russia in Global Affairs magazine, said the Russian diplomat's detention was retaliation by Dutch authorities for the seizure of the Arctic Sunrise ship and the arrest of 30 people who were on board, including some Dutch nationals.

"During the Cold War, these incidents with Soviet diplomats in the West happened all the time, naturally 'purely by accident.' But everybody understood that it was meant as a sort of signal" Lukyanov told RIA Novosti on Tuesday.

Based on information provided by the police, Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans "concluded that the detention and arrest of a Russian diplomat, who is guaranteed full diplomatic immunity, violated" international law.

"For this, the Netherlands apologizes to Russia," a ministry statement said. Timmermans said, however, that he "personally understands" the actions of the police officers involved.

Dutch child protection services said earlier they were investigating a complaint from neighbors of diplomat Dmitry Borodin about his treatment of his children. The Russian Embassy said the complaint was "one of the pretexts" for the incident.

The spat comes at an unfortunate time for the two nations, as 2013 is meant to be celebrated as the Russia-Netherlands Bilateral Year.

Material from The Moscow Times is included in this report.

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