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Russia Sanctions Top Montenegro Politicians

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Montenegro's Prime Minister Dusko Markovic **Darko Vojinovic / AP**

Montenegro's top politicians have been barred from Russia just days before the country formally enters NATO.

Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, former Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, and Speaker of the Montenegrin Parliament Ivan Brajovic are all affected by the ban, Montenego's Pobjeda newspaper reported.

An unnamed source in Montenegro's Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the outlet that the sanctions list featured more than 70 individuals, including the heads of several Montenegrin companies, Russia's TASS news agency said.

The reports come days after top Montenegrin lawmaker Miodrag Vukovic was detained at Domodedovo Moscow's International Airport on his way to Belarus.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said that the ban had been put in place as a

response to anti-Russian sanctions adopted by Montenegro in 2014, in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea.

The move comes days before the country official joins NATO on June 5.

Related article: Russia Accused of Backing Montenegro Coup

Tensions between Russia and Montenegro have flared since February when the government in Podgorica accused Moscow of backing a coup against the government.

The Kremlin has denied the claims, instead accusing Montenegrin politicians of inventing a "Russian threat" to justify the country's ascension to NATO.

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