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Russian Official Says U.S. Dacha Row 'Almost Solved,' Amid Threats of Retaliation

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A vehicle with diplomatic license plates passes journalists after departing from a Russian compound in Long Island, Dec, 30, 2016. **Rashid Umar Abbasi / Reuters**

A top Russian official has said Moscow and Washington have "almost solved" a row over two diplomatic compounds which were confiscated by U.S. authorities late last year, amid threats of retaliation.

Answering a question from reporters on whether the two sides had found a way to solve the dispute, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov responded: "Almost, almost."

Ryabkov made the statement following a meeting with U.S. Under Secretary of State Tom Shannon in Washington.

Shannon did not comment on how close the two sides were to a resolution.

In December last year, then-President Barack Obama expelled 35 Russian diplomats and their

families from the U.S. and closed two diplomatic recreational compounds, known as “dachas” – one outside of Washington D.C., and the other outside New York City.

The move was taken in response to reports of Russia’s alleged hacking of institutions related to the U.S. presidential election.

Moscow stopped short of taking retaliatory measures in anticipation of warmer relations with the incoming President Donald Trump. The Kremlin has recently sharpened its rhetoric, saying it would not accept any negotiating over the return of the property.

"We consider that it must be returned without any conditions and talking," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Last week, the pro-government newspaper Izvestia cited an unidentified source in the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying the Kremlin was considering retaliating by shuttering U.S. diplomatic property and ejecting 30 American diplomats from Russia.

In an online statement published on Tuesday morning, the ministry said that "if Washington does not address this and other concerns, including persistent efforts to hinder the operation of Russia’s diplomatic missions, Russia has the right to take retaliatory measures in accordance with the principle of reciprocity."

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