

New 'Hardliner' Russian Ambassador to U.S. Extends Olive Branch

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Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS

In the first interview since his appointment, Russia's new Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov appeared to strike a conciliatory tone.

Antonov, known as a "hardliner" in his previous capacity as deputy foreign and defense minister, is expected to replace Sergei Kislyak on Sept. 1.

"I will try to convey to the Americans that we are not enemies but should be partners in the interests of Russia and the U.S.," Antonov [told](#) the Kommersant business daily.

He added that the Russian Embassy in Washington will continue to operate as normal, despite an announcement from its U.S. counterpart last week that it would restrict the issuing of non-immigrant visas to Russian citizens.

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“I will work in a calm, professional, open way, trying to work together with colleagues in Moscow and Washington to stabilize, and then straighten out Russian-American relations,” Antonov told Kommersant.

The new envoy blamed the souring in relations between the two countries on a “hyperactive Russophobe lobby” in the U.S., adding Russia remains “open to finding common ground and moving forward.”

Addressing widespread claims of the perceived threat of Russian hackers and spies, Antonov said Americans were being sold the idea that “Russia is an enemy and the source of all evil.”

“However, I am confident that the vast majority of U.S. citizens are immune to such blatant propaganda,” he said in the interview.

The interview comes a day before the U.S. mission to Russia is reducing the number of its staff by roughly 700 people following an order from Russia's Foreign Ministry.

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