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Trump Invited Putin For Meeting at White House, Kremlin Says

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Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump **Kremlin Press Service**

U.S. President Donald Trump invited Russian President Vladimir Putin for a meeting at the White House during a phone call last month, a Kremlin aide told reporters on Monday.

Trump reportedly extended the invitation on March 20 during a phone call congratulating Putin with winning a fourth presidential term, the Russian president's foreign policy aide Yury Ushakov told reporters on Monday. The U.S. president was criticized for having issued the congratulatory phone call days after Russia was blamed by U.S. allies for poisoning an ex-spy in England, a topic that did not come up in the conversation, according to a White House readout of the call.

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"When our presidents spoke on the phone, Trump suggested having a first meeting in

Washington at the White House," Interfax cited Ushakov as saying at a press briefing on Monday.

"This is quite an interesting and positive idea," Ushakov said, before admitting that a date had not been set for the possible meeting.

"We'd like to believe that [discussions] will begin," he added.

A Kremlin readout of the phone call mentioned that the "possibility of organising a top-level meeting received special attention" while the White House made no mention of the potential summit.

Since the phone call, Washington has expelled 60 Russian diplomats and closed the Russian consulate in Seattle over allegations of a Russian role in the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

Russia retaliated late last week by announcing the closure of the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg and the expulsion of 60 American diplomats.

"Against the backdrop of these events, it's difficult to discuss the possibility of holding a summit," Ushakov told the news briefing.

"We want to hope that... one day, at one time or another we can arrive at the start of a serious and constructive dialogue," he added.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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