

Bolton to Discuss Putin-Trump Summit in Moscow Talks

By [Reuters](#)

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Kremlin.ru

U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton held talks in Moscow on Wednesday with Russian officials ahead of a meeting with Vladimir Putin, part of an effort to lay the ground for a summit between the Russian president and President Donald Trump.

Bolton, a lifelong hawk who warned last year before his own appointment that Washington negotiated with Putin's Russia at its peril, is due to give a news conference at 4:30 p.m., where he might name the date and location of a summit.

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The TASS news agency reported that Bolton had discussed potential cooperation between the two countries' security councils with Yuri Averyanov, the first deputy secretary of Russia's

Security Council.

Bolton, who last year accused Putin in Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper of "lying with the benefit of the best KGB training," then began talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov ahead of his planned sit-down with Putin.

Trump congratulated Putin by phone in March after the Russian leader's landslide re-election victory and said the two would meet soon. However, the Russians have since complained about the difficulty of setting up a meeting.

Relations between Washington and Moscow are languishing at a post-Cold War low. They are at odds over Syria, Ukraine, allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and accusations Moscow was behind the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain in March.

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Expectations for the outcome of any Putin-Trump summit are therefore low, even though Trump said before he was elected that he wanted to improve battered U.S.-Russia ties.

A special prosecutor in the United States has indicted Russian firms and individuals for meddling in the presidential election to benefit Trump, and is investigating whether anyone in Trump's campaign helped the Russian effort. Trump denies wrongdoing and calls the investigation a "witch hunt."

The Kremlin said on Wednesday that Putin and Bolton would discuss what it described as "the sad state" of U.S.-Russia relations.

Details unclear

The summit, if it happens, is expected to take place around the second half of July after Trump attends a NATO summit in Brussels and visits Britain. A senior U.S. official said on Tuesday the Finnish capital of Helsinki was being considered as a location.

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U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said at the weekend he expected Bolton's Moscow visit to lead to a summit "in the not too distant future." Pompeo said Washington was "trying to find places where we had overlapping interests, but protecting American interest where we do not."

Such a summit would be likely to cause irritation in parts of the West, where countries such as Britain want to isolate Putin. It would also go down badly among Trump's foreign and domestic critics, who question his commitment to NATO and fret over his desire to rebuild ties with Russia even as Washington continues to tighten sanctions on Moscow.

The United States initially sanctioned Russia over its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea and its backing for a pro-Russian uprising in eastern Ukraine. Subsequent sanctions have

punished Moscow for what Washington has called its malign behaviour and meddling in U.S. politics, something Russia denies.

Some Trump critics say Russia has not significantly altered its behaviour since 2014 and should therefore not be given the prestige that they believe a summit would confer.

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