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Kremlin Says U.S. Senator's Comparison of Russian Leadership to Mafia is 'Russophobic'

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Senator John Kennedy (Tammy Anthony Baker / Flickr)

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday said he found a U.S. senator's statement comparing the Russian leadership to the mafia "difficult to understand."

Senator John Kennedy traveled to Moscow as part of a congressional delegation earlier this month. The group met with high-ranking Russian officials and reportedly discussed the conflict in Syria, Ukraine and alleged elections meddling.

In comments to the press, Kennedy described Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as "a bully."

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"We didn't call each other an 'ignorant sl-t' or anything, but we exchanged words," he was

cited as saying by the Associated Press. “There is no political philosophy in Russia. It’s sort of like saying, what’s the political philosophy of the mafia?”

In a response to the comments on Tuesday, Peskov said “the American political establishment is a) full of stereotypes b) under huge Russophobic pressure,” Interfax reported.

The harsh words come a week before U.S. President Donald Trump is set to meet President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki on July 16.

Asked by White House reporters to say whether Russia was a friend or foe, Trump responded he couldn’t say. “As far as I’m concerned, a competitor,” he said.

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