

Kremlin Says Russian Military Specialists Are Still in Venezuela, Contradicting Trump Tweet

By [Reuters](#)

June 04, 2019



Igor Ivanko / Moskva News Agency

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it didn't know where U.S. President Donald Trump had got the idea Moscow had removed most of its military specialists from Venezuela, who it said continued to work there.

Trump tweeted on Monday that Russia had told the United States it had removed "most of their people" from Venezuela, where Moscow has maintained close military and economic ties with socialist President Nicolas Maduro.

Related article: [Russia Told U.S. 'Most of Their People' Have Left Venezuela, Trump Says](#)

His statement caused a stir because, if true, it would mark a significant setback for Maduro,

whom Washington is keen to dislodge and whom the Kremlin has steadfastly stood by.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, however, told reporters that Moscow had not been in touch with Trump on the subject. He said Trump had apparently got his information from newspaper reports, which Russian officials have already denied, or from somewhere else.

"By all appearances, it's a circumstantial reference to newspaper sources of information, because there was no official message about this from the Russian side and there couldn't be one," Peskov said of Trump's statement.

"There really are (Russian) specialists who service hardware that's been previously delivered and that process is going according to plan."

Trump's tweet followed a Wall Street Journal article on Sunday that said Russian state defense contractor Rostec had cut its staff in Venezuela to just a few dozen, citing a person close to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Rostec said the report had exaggerated the number of staff it had in Venezuela "dozens of times over," that the number of permanent staff there had remained unchanged for years, and that technical staff rotated in and out of the country to repair and service military hardware.

It said technical specialists had recently finished servicing a batch of aircraft and that it remained committed to deepening its cooperation with the Venezuelan ministry of defense and honoring its commitments to Caracas.

Peskov said on Tuesday that the Kremlin didn't know what Trump meant when he asserted that Russia had withdrawn some military personnel from Venezuela and had no idea what information he was responding to.

"I don't know what it's a reaction to, better to find out from the American side," he said.

Interfax had earlier cited an unnamed source in Caracas as saying Russia was continuing to support Venezuela through a long-standing program of military technical assistance.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/06/04/kremlin-says-russian-military-specialists-are-still-in-venezuela-contradicting-trump-tweet-a65869>