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Russia Won't Congratulate Biden on U.S. Election Victory Before Official Results – Kremlin

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Russia will not yet recognize Joe Biden as President-elect of the United States, the Kremlin said Monday as world leaders rushed to congratulate the Democratic Party challenger after U.S. television networks declared him the winner.

"We believe it's correct to wait for the official results of the elections to be announced," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a phone briefing, according to the state-run TASS news agency.

Trump has yet to concede and Biden's win remains a projection as several states are still counting votes.

Asked why Putin congratulated U.S. President Donald Trump less than 12 hours after he was declared winner in 2016, Peskov said that "the difference is absolutely clear: there's currently

a legal dispute of the results."

"In any case, we hope that we'll be able to establish a dialogue and agree together on ways to normalize our bilateral relations with the next U.S. president," he added. "A significant part of these bilateral relations, meaning stability and security, concerns not only our two nations but the nations of the whole world."

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World leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson congratulated Biden after networks declared Saturday that Biden had taken an insurmountable lead over Donald Trump in the nearly complete count from the Nov. 3 election.

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny congratulated Biden on his victory Sunday before there was any reaction from the Kremlin to the U.S. election results. Navalny in a tweet congratulated Biden, running mate Kamala Harris and Americans for "defining the new leadership in a free and fair election."

"This is a privilege which is not available to all countries," said Navalny, who is recovering in Germany from a suspected poisoning in August.

Russia has been accused of interfering in the 2016 U.S. election to help get Trump elected, in the hopes he would take a softer line with Moscow.

Biden is expected to take a tougher stand and during the campaign slammed Trump for having "embraced so many autocrats around the world, starting with Vladimir Putin."

AFP contributed reporting.

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