

# Kremlin Says Biden Does Not Want to Improve Ties With Russia

By [Anna Smolchenko for AFP](#)

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"The price he's going to pay, you'll see shortly," Biden said of Putin Wednesday. [jlhervàs / Flickr \(CC BY 2.0\)](#)

Russia said Thursday U.S. President Joe Biden had no interest in improving ties with Russia after he referred to Vladimir Putin as a "killer," sparking the biggest crisis in years between the former Cold War rivals.

Russia's relationship with the West has eroded over a spate of disagreements, but relations plunged to new depths Wednesday after Biden agreed Putin was a "killer" in a U.S. television interview.

"These statements from the president of the United States are very bad," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"It is clear that he does not want to get the relationship with our country back on track, and

we will proceed from that," he added.

In a swift response to Biden's comments, Moscow on Wednesday evening recalled its ambassador in the United States for urgent consultations — an unprecedented move in recent Russian diplomacy.

Its embassy in Washington said ambassador Anatoly Antonov was set to depart for Russia on Saturday to discuss "ways to rectify Russia-U.S. ties, which are in crisis."

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Peskov on Thursday said that Putin would receive Antonov "if need be," but declined to say if Moscow was ready to sever diplomatic ties with the United States altogether.

In the interview with ABC News on Wednesday Biden said Putin will "pay a price" for trying to undermine Biden's candidacy in the U.S. election in 2020.

Asked if he thought Putin is "a killer," Biden said, "I do."

His comments stood in stark contrast with his predecessor, Donald Trump, who was often accused of going soft on Putin.

## **'Watershed moment'**

Commenting on Moscow's decision to recall Antonov, the embassy warned that Biden's comments had pushed bilateral ties to the brink.

"Certain ill-considered statements of high-ranking U.S. officials have put the already excessively confrontational relations under the threat of collapse," it said.

Moscow and Washington share a deep and mutual distrust that flared after the Kremlin's annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014.

The G7 group of leading economic powers said on Thursday it would not accept Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, in a statement marking seven years since the takeover.

"We unequivocally denounce Russia's temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol. Russia's attempts to legitimize it are not, and will not, be recognized," it said.

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Washington's ties with Moscow deteriorated further over Russia's alleged meddling in the U.S. elections in 2016 and more recently when the West concluded that Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was poisoned last summer by Novichok, a Soviet-designed nerve agent.

But the two countries have continued to work together on issues of shared interest, including the Iran nuclear deal and the Afghanistan peace process.

Biden's comments were aired as the U.S. Commerce Department announced it was toughening export restrictions imposed on Russia as punishment for Navalny's poisoning in August.

Konstantin Kosachev, a deputy head at the Russian parliament's upper house, on Thursday described Biden's comments as "a watershed moment" and demanded Washington to apologize.

"Such statements are unacceptable in any circumstances and will inevitably sharply damage our bilateral ties," he wrote on Facebook.

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Over the past few decades, Russia has rarely recalled its ambassadors.

Moscow last summoned its envoy in the U.S. in 1998 over a Western bombing campaign in Iraq.

In 2014, during the fallout after the annexation of Crimea, Putin refused to recall a Washington envoy even after then US President Barack Obama said that the Russian leader would pay for his Ukraine policies.

Putin at the time said recalling an envoy would be a "measure of last resort."

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