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Czechs to Exclude Russia From $7Bln Nuclear Tender

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Rosatom's anticipated rejection from the Dukovany bidding reflects a geopolitical shift for one of Russia's closest allies in the European Union and NATO. **Zuma / TASS**

Czech officials said Sunday they plan to exclude Russia's nuclear monopoly Rosatom from taking part in a $7 billion tender to replace the central European nation's aging power plant after Prague took action against Moscow over a deadly 2014 blast.

Over the weekend, the Czech Republic expelled 18 Russian diplomats and accused the two Skripal poisoning suspects of involvement in the military ammunition blast that killed two people. Russia, which kicked out 20 Czech diplomats in retaliation, dismissed the allegations as "made-up pretexts" and criticized Prague of bowing to pressure from the United States.

Related article: Moscow Lashes Out After Prague Accuses Skripal Suspects Over Deadly Blast

Czech Industry Minister Karel Havlíček said in a Sunday interview with CNN Prima that Russia will likely be denied access to the $7 billion tender to replace older units at the Dukovany

nuclear plant.

"I can't imagine Rosatom getting as far as the security assessment," Havlíček said.

The minister said the decision will be part of Czech cabinet discussions on Monday. Rosatom declined to comment.

In January, Havlíček had excluded Chinese companies from the tender on national security grounds and said discussions were underway on whether to allow Russia to participate.

Rosatom's anticipated rejection from the Dukovany bidding reflects a geopolitical shift for one of Russia's closest allies in the European Union and NATO as tensions spiral between Moscow and Prague.

AFP contributed reporting.

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