

# News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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**Vasily Maximov / AFP**

## **Hanging by a thread**

Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny risks cardiac arrest at "any minute" as his health has rapidly deteriorated, doctors warned Saturday.

Navalny's team has called for massive protests across Russia on Wednesday evening, just hours after President Vladimir Putin is set to deliver his state-of-the-nation address, in a bid to save his life.

## **International reaction**

U.S. President Joe Biden said Saturday that Navalny's situation was "totally unfair." His National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan warned Sunday that Russia will face "consequences" if Navalny dies.

France, Germany and the European Union on Sunday joined a growing international chorus of

protest at Navalny's plight, and EU foreign ministers will discuss the situation on Monday.

More than 70 prominent international writers, artists and academics, including Jude Law, Vanessa Redgrave and Benedict Cumberbatch, called on Putin to ensure that Navalny receives proper treatment immediately.

Meanwhile, Russia's ambassador in London, Andrei Kelin, said Navalny "will not be allowed to die in prison."

### **Return of Petrov and Boshirov**

Russia [announced](#) the expulsion of 20 Czech diplomats a day after Prague's "unprecedented" decision to expel 18 Russian diplomats identified as secret agents.

Czech authorities said they identified the 18 diplomats as secret agents of the Russian SVR and GRU intelligence services that are suspected of involvement in a 2014 explosion.

Czech police also said they were seeking two Russians in connection with the deadly ammunition depot blast. The two suspects had carried passports used by suspects in the attempted poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal in Britain in 2018.

### **Ukraine tensions**

Russia said it would expel a Ukrainian diplomat, prompting an immediate pledge of retaliation from Kiev and further escalating tensions over Moscow's troop buildup on Ukraine's eastern flank.

### **Related article: [Russia, Ukraine Expel Diplomats as Tensions Soar](#)**

Russia's domestic intelligence agency said the Ukrainian consul in St. Petersburg had been caught "red-handed" at a meeting with a Russian national as he sought to receive "classified" information. In response, the Ukrainian foreign ministry protested the "illegal" detention of its diplomat and said Kiev would expel a senior Russian diplomat.

### **Western 'plot'**

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Russia's FSB security service said that the two nations had thwarted an alleged U.S. plot to assassinate him and kidnap his children.

Russian authorities had arrested two Belarusian nationals in Moscow, Lukashenko said, adding that he plans to unveil what he called one of the most important decisions of his presidency.

Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya's office derided the claims of a plot to stage a "military coup" in Belarus as a "provocation."

*AFP contributed reporting to this article.*

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