

U.S. Ambassador in Russia to Return to Washington for Consultations

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U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan **Anton Novoderezhkin / TASS**

Updated at 1:00 p.m. on April 20 to add U.S. Embassy confirmation.

The United States' Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan will briefly return to Washington for consultations following tit-for-tat sanctions and diplomatic expulsions amid heightened tensions, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow [confirmed](#) Tuesday.

Axios [reported](#) Monday that the State Department recalled Sullivan after he initially [defied](#) Moscow's recommendation for him to return home for "serious consultations." His Russian counterpart has been in Moscow for a month after being recalled in response to U.S. President Joe Biden's televised remarks calling President Vladimir Putin a "killer."

Related article: [Russian Envoy Unlikely to Return to U.S. in Near Future, Deputy FM Says](#)

"I believe it is important for me to speak directly with my new colleagues in the Biden

administration in Washington about the current state of bilateral relations between the United States and Russia," Sullivan was quoted as saying in the embassy statement, adding that he also plans to visit his family.

Sullivan said he will return to his posting in Moscow "in the coming weeks" ahead of any meeting between Biden and Putin.

Sullivan will be meeting with members of the Biden administration in person for the first time since agreeing to continue serving in his post indefinitely. CNN reported last week that the White House has decided to [keep](#) the Trump administration appointee for the foreseeable future to "nurture areas of stability in the U.S.-Russia relationship."

His return comes a week after Russia retaliated to U.S. sanctions by banning top Biden officials from entering the country and expelling 10 U.S. diplomats. Moscow's moves came in response to Washington sanctioning 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential election and expanding restrictions on U.S. banks trading in Russian government debt.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the return of the U.S. and Russian ambassadors to their respective posts would depend on talks on a range of issues.

"If as a result of that there arises the desirability [of the envoys' return], then the ambassadors will probably return and begin to fulfill their duties," he told reporters Tuesday.

Despite the tit-for-tat sanctions, Russia's troop buildup near Ukraine and U.S. warnings of consequences if hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny dies in jail, the Kremlin said it viewed the prospects of a Biden-Putin summit "positively." Putin has yet to accept or decline Biden's summit offer from last week.

On Monday, Putin signaled openness for dialogue by [agreeing](#) to speak at Biden's online climate summit this Thursday.

Includes reporting from AFP.

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