

U.S. Envoy Sullivan Leaves Russia for Consultations Amid Strained Ties

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Sullivan is expected to hold discussions with Washington on the future of U.S.-Russia ties as tensions between the two powers reach new highs. **Karel Navarro / AP / TASS**

The United States' Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan has left Russia for consultations with Washington on the future of U.S.-Russia ties as tensions between the two powers reach new highs, Interfax [reported](#).

Moscow advised Sullivan last week to return to Washington for consultations after U.S. President Joe Biden's administration levied sanctions and diplomatic expulsions against Russia in retaliation to alleged malign activities. The envoy had reportedly [refused](#) to leave at first, despite the recommendation from President Vladimir Putin's top foreign policy aide.

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Sullivan departed from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport on a flight to London on Thursday morning, Interfax reported. Sullivan is taking a connecting flight to the U.S. through London

due to the lack of direct flights between Russia and the U.S., Interfax reported.

In addition to the Biden administration's sanctions — which were mirrored with tit-for-tat measures from Moscow — bilateral ties have eroded due to Russian troop buildup near the Ukrainian border and U.S. warnings of consequences if hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny dies in jail.

In a statement Monday, Sullivan had said “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.”

His return mirrors that of Russia's Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov, who arrived in Moscow last month for discussions on the future of bilateral ties amid the fallout from Biden's televised comments likening Putin to a “killer.”

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.

At the same time, the Kremlin has said it viewed the prospects of a Biden-Putin summit “positively.”

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