

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

May 17, 2021



Jim Watson / AFP

Unfriended

Russia on Friday formally designated the United States and the Czech Republic as "unfriendly states" amid the biggest crisis in ties between Moscow and Washington in years.

The Czech embassy will be allowed to employ no more than 19 Russian nationals and the U.S. embassy none at all, Moscow said. EU chief Charles Michel tweeted the bloc's "full solidarity" with Prague as he insisted the move "undermines diplomatic relations."

Ally assistance

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said Friday he asked Russian President Vladimir Putin for military support after accusing Azerbaijani troops of crossing the country's southern border and trying to claim territory.

Pashinyan also said that French President Emmanuel Macron "is ready to provide military

assistance [and is] considering the possibility of putting the issue on the agenda of the UN Security Council."

Spy games

A former officer in the U.S. Army's elite Special Forces unit the Green Berets was sentenced to 15 and a half years in prison on Friday for spying for Russia.

Peter Rafael Dzibinski Debbins, 46, pleaded guilty in November to providing national security information to Russian intelligence operatives.

According to prosecutors, the U.S.-born Debbins was recruited by the Russians as early as 1996, before he had joined the army but after several trips to Russia, the native country of his mother.

Hacked off

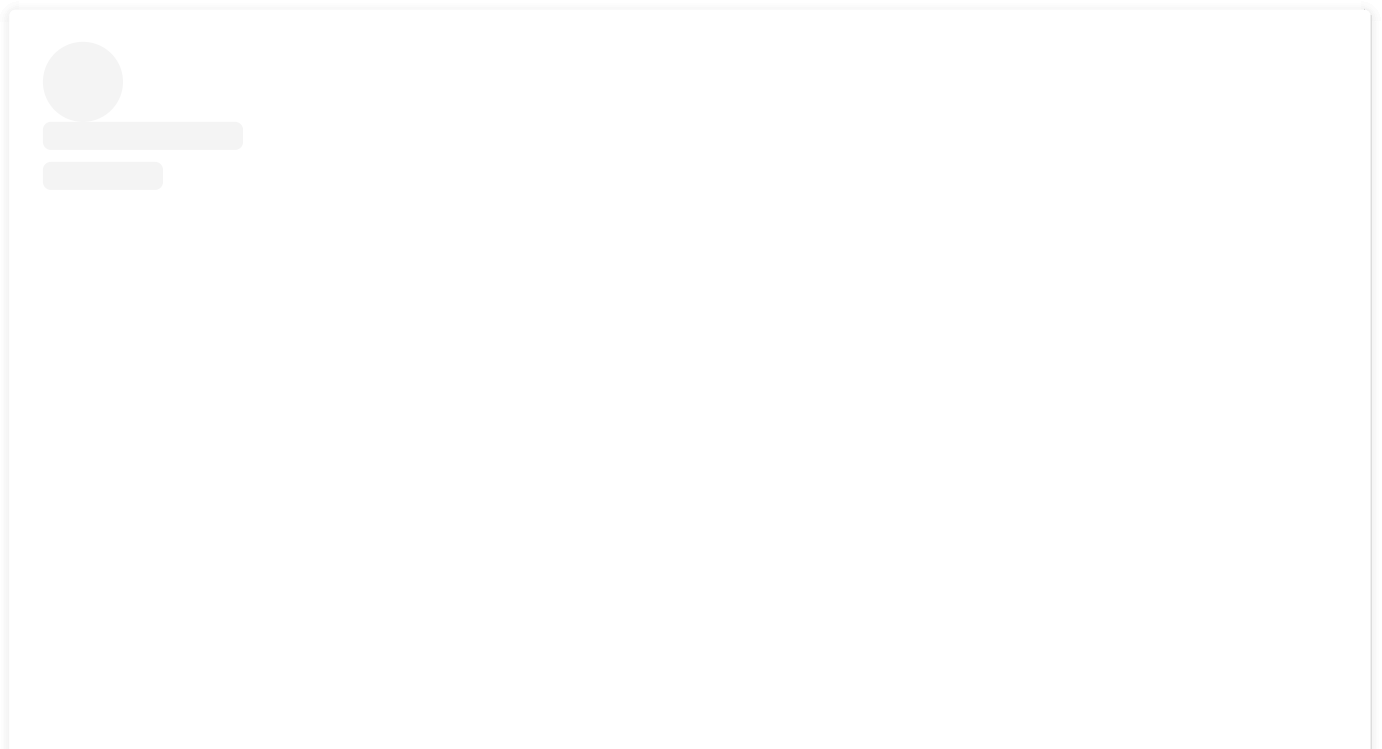
The Russia-based criminal group known as DarkSide that targeted the U.S. gas network Colonial Pipeline in a so-called ransomware attack [reportedly](#) told its hacking associates of plans to shut down.

DarkSide told associates it has lost access to hacking infrastructure due to pressure from the U.S. and disruption from an undisclosed law-enforcement agency, The Wall Street Journal reported Friday.

Child soldiers

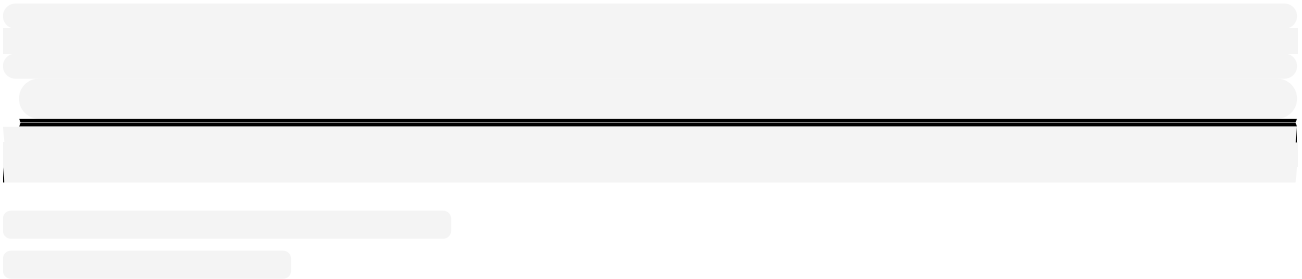
Schoolchildren were seen [brandishing mock weapons](#) and marching in military formation at a school event outside Moscow marking Soviet victory in World War II.

Embed:





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Публикация от МБОУ "Всеволодовская СОШ 42" (@vsevolodovskaia_shkola_42)

The school's vice principal in the Moscow region village of Vsevolodovo told media, which reported that the children sang "We are Russians, God is with us" while marching, that the video showed its third graders with [toy guns](#).

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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