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Russia Summons Czech Envoy Over 'Extortionist' Arms Blast Claims

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Czech Ambassador to Mosow Vitezslav Pivonka **Alexander Scherbak / TASS**

Russia said Thursday it has summoned the Czech ambassador in Moscow to protest Prague's "extortionist" demand for compensation over a deadly 2014 arms depot blast.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the gesture was in response to a Czech diplomat delivering the compensation claims to Russia's envoy in Prague on Monday.

Related article: Czech Republic Asks Russia to Pay for 2014 Arms Blast

"Usually those who act this way — without trial and investigation, demanding money with threats and insults — are called extortionists," Zakharova said at a briefing broadcast online.

The Russian diplomat said her colleagues plan to deliver Moscow's position on "this unacceptable politicized horseplay" to Ambassador Vitezslav Pivonka in person.

The Czech Foreign Ministry has not specified the amount it had requested from Moscow for

the explosion that Prague accused Russian military intelligence of orchestrating. Czech media placed it at $30.2 million.

Embed:

> ◙#Zakharova: ◙◙ @AmbRusCz received a note from Czech officials in which our partners make the absurd demands that Russia must compensate the damage caused by the explosions in Vrbetice.
>
> ◙◙#Prague's proposal to discuss its claims is unacceptable. pic.twitter.com/mOvZ0XTYVx
>
> — MFA Russia ◙◙ (@mfa_russia) July 1, 2021

Two workers died and 50 tons of munitions were destroyed in the 2014 explosion at an ammunition depot in the eastern Czech village of Vrbětice.

Czech-Russian tensions spiralled in April after Prague expelled 18 Russian diplomats, Moscow expelled 20 Czech diplomats in response and designated Czechia an "unfriendly state."

The United States is the only other listed "unfriendly" state, a designation that caps the number of local staff its embassy is allowed to employ.

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