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Russia Shutters NATO Missions Over Delegation Expulsions

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Russia will suspend its mission to NATO in retaliation to the alliance's expulsion of its delegation members, Foreign Minister Segei Lavrov said Monday.

NATO this month stripped eight Russian mission members of their accreditations, accusing them of secretly working as intelligence officers.

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"We are suspending the work of our official mission to NATO, including the work of our military representative from Nov. 1 or it could take a few more days," the state-run TASS news agency quoted Lavrov as saying to reporters.

Russia will also close the Western military bloc's liaison mission — established in 2002 and hosted at the Belgian Embassy — and information bureau in Moscow, Lavrov said.

"NATO is not interested in any equitable dialogue or in any joint work. If this is so, then we do not see a great need to continue to pretend that any changes are possible in the foreseeable future," he said.

He said that in case of urgent matters, NATO could liaise via the Russian Ambassador in Belgium.

According to Lavrov, Russia notified NATO of its actions in advance.

Tensions between Moscow and NATO have remained at their highest levels since the Cold War in the years following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

Russia has long had an observer mission to NATO as part of a two-decade-old NATO-Russia Council meant to promote cooperation in common security areas, but it is not a member of the U.S.-led Alliance.

AFP contributed reporting.

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