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Russia’s U.S. Ambassador Decries Banking ‘Blockade’

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Russia’s Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov votes at a polling station at the Russian embassy during the 2021 Russian parliamentary election. **Darya Ryazhskikh/TASS**

Russia's ambassador in the United States has accused Washington of "blockading" Russian diplomatic missions amid increasingly strained relations over Moscow's invasion of pro-Western Ukraine.

"In effect, the embassy is under a blockade by U.S. government agencies," Ambassador Anatoly Antonov told Russian state television.

Antonov said the Russian mission has been receiving threatening phone calls and letters and, at one point, staff had been prevented from exiting the embassy in Washington.

He added that the Bank of America had blocked the accounts of its consulates general in Houston and New York.

Both Russia and the U.S. have taken part in tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats in recent years,

following accusations of election interference and the war in Ukraine.

Around 170 diplomats and staff remain at the Russian Embassy in Washington, two dozen of whom are expected to depart by late June.

Antonov also decried a lack of engagement with Biden administration officials in an interview last week with Politico. He revealed that he has not had a single conversation with President Vladimir Putin since his appointment in 2017 — including in the two months since the Russian president ordered the invasion of Ukraine.

"To give an opportunity to FBI to listen to everything what Mr. Putin could say [to] me?" the diplomat was quoted as saying.

"I have had enough conversations with senior officials in the Kremlin, in various agencies," he told Politico. "We have a different system."

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