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Moscow Expels Estonian Ambassador as Tallinn Pledges More Arms to Kyiv

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Estonian Embassy in Moscow. **Moskva News Agency**

Russia has expelled Estonia's ambassador from Moscow in a move against its "Russophobic" Baltic neighbor, Russia's Foreign Ministry announced Monday as Tallinn pledged additional military aid to Ukraine.

In a statement, the Russian ministry slammed Estonia's announcement of the expulsion of 21 Russian diplomats and embassy staff to reach parity between personnel.

"Tallinn has elevated total Russophobia and cultivation of hostility toward our country to the level of state policy," it said.

Related article: Estonia Announces Expulsion of 21 Russian Diplomatic Staff

The ministry said it downgraded diplomatic representatives in both countries to the level of chargé d'affairs in response to Estonia's "unfriendly step" and the "purposeful destruction of

the entire system of relations with Russia in recent years."

It summoned Estonian Ambassador Margus Laidre to the Foreign Ministry and ordered him to leave Russia by Feb. 7.

Later Monday, Estonia said it would expel the Russian ambassador from Tallinn in retaliation for the expulsion of its envoy from Russia.

"We stand by the principle of parity in relations with Russia," the Estonian ministry of foreign affairs said in a tweet, adding that the Russian ambassador would also have to leave on Feb. 7.

Estonia's neighbor Latvia said it will downgrade its diplomatic relations with Russia from Feb. 24 in a move of solidarity with Tallinn.

Estonia, a former Soviet republic and current EU and NATO member that has been a staunch supporter of Ukraine during Russia's nearly year-long invasion, committed all of its stock of 155mm howitzers and ammunition to Kyiv earlier Monday.

"We want to set a precedented in such a way that other countries have no excuses why they cannot provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to win the war," Estonian Ambassador to Kyiv Kaimo Kuusk said.

The remark was a thinly veiled reference to Germany, which has resisted Western pressure to provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 tanks.

Estonia is Ukraine's only ally to have committed more than 1% of its GDP in bilateral aid.

AFP contributed reporting.

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