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Russia Freezes Finnish Embassy Bank Accounts – Finnish FM

By AFP

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The Finnish Embassy in Moscow. **Pelagia Tikhonova / Moskva News Agency**

Finland's Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said Wednesday that Russia had frozen in late April the bank accounts of its embassy in Moscow and consulate in St. Petersburg.

"The accounts of the Finnish missions in Russia are frozen and cannot be used at the moment," Haavisto told a press conference, adding that Finland had been in contact with Russian authorities.

"A note was sent to Russia on this issue. Russia has not yet given an official explanation why the accounts have been frozen," Haavisto said.

The foreign minister noted that Finland had not frozen the accounts of Russian diplomatic missions in Finland.

Therefore "it cannot be said that this is some kind of reaction to measures taken against

Russia," Haavisto said.

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But he added that "the reason for this is probably, to some extent, that EU sanctions on financial transactions have caused headaches for Russian missions in the West."

Haavisto explained that other EU countries have experienced similar problems with payment transactions in Russia.

"However, to our knowledge, the restrictions on Finland are among the most severe," he said.

Finland, which became NATO's newest member early last month, was made aware of the frozen bank accounts on April 27.

The freeze coincided with the announcement by Finnish state-owned utility Fortum that control of its Russian subsidiary had been seized by Moscow, after President Vladimir Putin signed a presidential decree approving the takeover.

So far, Finnish representatives have been able to operate normally in Russia thanks to their cash reserves.

"But it is clear that the situation, if it continues for a long time, may bring the need to find new solutions," Haavisto said.

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