

Moscow Says Awaits U.S. Response to Prisoner Swap Proposals

By [AFP](#)

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Evan Gershkovich. **Natalia Kolesnikova / AFP**

Officials in Moscow said Wednesday that they are waiting for the United States to respond to its prisoner swap proposals, days before American reporter Evan Gershkovich was set to face trial in Russia on espionage charges.

President Vladimir Putin said in February that talks on a prisoner swap involving Gershkovich were underway, but the Kremlin has not given any details on the progress of the negotiations.

"The ball is in the court of the United States, we are waiting for them to respond to the ideas that were presented to them," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the state-run TASS news agency.

"They are well-known to the relevant parts of the U.S. administration. I understand that, perhaps, something in these ideas does not suit the Americans. That's their problem," he

added.

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The closed-doors trial against Gershkovich begins on June 26 in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg. He could face up to 20 years in prison if found guilty of spying.

Washington has accused Moscow of arresting its citizens on baseless charges to use them as bargaining chips to secure the release of Russians convicted abroad.

Among other U.S. nationals being held in Russia is reporter Alsu Kurmasheva, who was arrested last year for failing to register as a "foreign agent." Her employers denounced the case against her as politically motivated.

Former U.S. marine Paul Whelan, in prison in Russia since 2018 and serving a 16-year sentence on espionage charges, is also pushing to be included in any future prisoner exchange.

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