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Putin Relieves Russian Ambassador to U.S. With No Replacement Named

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Russian Ambassador to The US Anatoly Antonov. **Lev Radin / ZUMA Press Wire / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin signed a decree Thursday relieving Anatoly Antonov from his post as Moscow's ambassador to the United States amid historic lows in U.S.-Russia relations.

Antonov, 69, had headed the Russian diplomatic mission in Washington since 2017 and returned to Russia over the weekend. A staunch supporter of Putin and the invasion of Ukraine, Antonov said in July 2024 that his term was nearing an end.

The Kremlin said his replacement would be named "in a timely manner" when asked whether his return indicated a downgrade in Russian-U.S. ties.

Antonov is a former deputy foreign and defense minister who was born in the Siberian city of Omsk in 1955 and joined the Soviet Foreign Ministry in 1978. He previously worked with American officials as the Foreign Ministry's head of security and disarmament, holding high-level talks on reducing the countries' nuclear stockpiles.

The diplomat, who is under EU and U.K. sanctions over the Russian invasion of Ukraine, served at a time when relations between the United States and Russia deteriorated sharply due to Moscow's 2022 invasion.

Even before the invasion, the U.S. diplomatic presence in Russia had been sharply reduced after a decree by Putin limiting the hiring of local staff, with Russians seeking U.S. visas often obliged to go to embassies in third countries.

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