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Russian and U.S. Officials Meet in Istanbul for Embassy Talks

By AFP

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Journalists gather outside the U.S. Consul General's residence in Istanbul. **Kirill Zharov / TASS**

Russian and U.S. officials met in Istanbul on Thursday to discuss embassy-related issues as part of efforts to stabilize ties, Russian news agencies reported.

The talks, held at the U.S. consul general's residence, followed this month's first high-level meeting between the two nuclear powers since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Neither side disclosed the participants, though Russia's state-run TASS news agency reported that the Russian delegation included representatives from the Foreign Ministry.

The Istanbul talks, which lasted around six hours, were aimed at normalizing the operations of both countries' diplomatic missions after a series of tit-for-tat expulsions of embassy staff during former U.S. administrations.

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U.S. President Donald Trump has sought to reset relations with Moscow since taking office last month, reaching out to Russian President Vladimir Putin and initiating high-level talks for the first time in over three years.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met on Feb. 18 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where they agreed to begin talks on ending the war in Ukraine.

Putin said later on Thursday that initial discussions with the United States have given him "some hope" of resolving "problems," including the war in Ukraine.

"The first contacts with the new U.S. administration give some hope. There is a mutual desire to work on restoring relations," the Kremlin leader said at a Federal Security Service (FSB) annual meeting.

NATO member Turkey has previously played a mediating role in the Ukraine conflict, hosting direct negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv in March 2022.

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