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U.S. Greenlights New Russian Ambassador, Ending Months-Long Vacancy

Alexander Darchiev is unlikely to wield much influence, as Moscow and Washington have handled most major issues at a higher level in recent years.

By Pyotr Kozlov

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The Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C. **Vladislav Pavlov / TASS**

The United States has approved Russia's appointment of Alexander Darchiev as its new ambassador paving the way for him to assume the long-vacant post in Washington.

"The American side has issued an official note granting agrément for the appointment of Alexander Darchiev, director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's North American Department, as the new Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States," the Russian Foreign

Ministry said in a statement Friday.

The move comes amid the sudden thaw in U.S.-Russia relations following President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Darchiev's appointment had been in the works since October 2024, when his predecessor, Anatoly Antonov, returned to Moscow. On Thursday, he led Russia's delegation in Istanbul for six-hour negotiations with U.S. diplomats — talks that culminated in Washington's formal approval of his posting.

A seasoned diplomat, Darchiev previously served at Russia's Embassy in Washington in the late 2000s before holding positions in the Foreign Ministry. He later spent six years as Russia's ambassador to Canada and headed the ministry's North American Department for the past four years.

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Darchiev is a protegé of Putin aide Yury Ushakov, Boris Bondarev, a former Russian diplomat in Geneva who publicly resigned in protest of the invasion of Ukraine, told The Moscow Times.

Ushakov was part of Moscow's delegation at the recent U.S.-Russia summit in Saudi Arabia.

Moscow has traditionally appointed a deputy foreign minister to its top diplomatic post in Washington, given the strategic weight of U.S.-Russia relations. But in this case, the Kremlin has opted for a lower-ranking official — a decision some see as a reflection of the state of bilateral ties.

"Technically, this is a downgrade," a Foreign Ministry official told The Moscow Times on condition of anonymity. "If relations were in a better place, the post would likely have gone to Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov instead of Darchiev."

A former senior Kremlin official echoed that assessment, noting that key U.S.-Russia matters are now handled at a higher level.

"I wouldn't be surprised if, for the next few years, Darchiev's primary focus is simply getting Russia's embassy and consulates in the U.S. running smoothly again," the ex-official said, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

Ryabkov, a seasoned negotiator on arms control and security issues, will remain in Moscow, where his expertise is deemed more critical.

"He's needed here," the Foreign Ministry official said.

Alexander Gabuev, head of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center in Berlin, described Darchiev as a consummate professional.

"He's a functionary to the core — an Americanist who has spent his career on the U.S. and

Canada portfolio," Gabuev told The Moscow Times.

"He can be utterly charming when needed or a hardliner when the situation calls for it. He's pragmatic and will strictly follow instructions from the Kremlin, doing only what's possible given the state of relations and the orders he receives," Gabuev said.

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