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New U.S.-Russian Talks Coming 'Very Soon,' Deputy FM Says

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Alexander Ryumin / TASS

Russian and U.S. officials could meet "very soon" for another round of talks aimed at restoring the operations of their diplomatic missions, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Tuesday.

Officials from the two countries met for embassy talks on Feb. 27 and April 10 in the Turkish city of Istanbul after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met in Saudi Arabia on Feb. 18.

"The third round of bilateral consultations on irritants is approaching. It's too early to talk about a specific date, but I hope the discussions will take place very soon," Ryabkov was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

He said Moscow will seek "clearer answers" to its proposal to resume direct flights between Russia and the United States, as well as for Washington to return six Russian-owned properties that were seized between 2016 and 2018 in response to alleged election

interference.

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Russia first raised the possibility of restoring direct flights during talks with American officials in Istanbul on Feb. 27 as the incoming Trump administration sought to begin mending relations with Moscow.

U.S. officials apparently said that the restoration of direct air travel with Russia would be contingent on progress toward a ceasefire in Ukraine, according to the Kremlin.

Ryabkov said Tuesday that the third round of talks with the United States would also touch on larger international issues.

“This includes major topics: the Middle East and, of course, discussions on the Iranian nuclear program,” he told reporters.

U.S. President Donald Trump said after a call with President Vladimir Putin last Wednesday that the Russian leader had offered to “participate” in talks on Tehran’s nuclear program. The Kremlin said Putin was ready to “help resolve” the standoff after Trump accused Iran of “slow-walking” its response to an offer of a deal.

Ryabkov said: “We receive instructions after each phone conversation in the form of direct directives.”

Later on Tuesday, Russia’s Ambassador to the United States, Alexander Darchiyev, told TASS that the next round of talks between the two countries would take place in Moscow.

There was no immediate response from Washington about the reported upcoming discussions.

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