The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Taliban Diplomat to Take Role as Moscow Ambassador

By AFP

July 01, 2025



Members of the Taliban attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 18. **Dmitri Lovetsky / AP Photo / TASS**

A Taliban diplomat will on Tuesday assume the role as Afghanistan's ambassador to Russia, the Islamist group's first top envoy to Moscow since seizing power in 2021, Russian state media reported.

Gul Hassan, a former consul in Pakistan, arrived in the capital earlier on Tuesday and will soon "take up his duties," the state-run TASS news agency said.

An official at the Afghan embassy told AFP that Hassan "was due to arrive today."

Moscow has expanded its economic and diplomatic ties with the Islamist group since it returned to power in Afghanistan following a 20-year insurgency against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul.

Several other countries including China and the United Arab Emirates have also accepted a Taliban-appointed envoy, though no state has yet officially recognized them as Afghanistan's lawful government.

The Taliban seized power after American forces supporting the country's internationally recognized government pulled out in 2021.

Moscow has taken steps to normalize relations with the Taliban authorities since then, removing their designation as a "terrorist organization" in April and inviting them to official events.

Russia had already accepted a Taliban-appointed charge d'affaires in 2022.

Russia was the first country to open a business representative office in Kabul after the Taliban takeover, and has announced plans to use Afghanistan as a transit hub for gas heading to Southeast Asia.

In July 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin called the Taliban "allies in the fight against terrorism."

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