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Putin Meets Khamenei's Top Adviser Larijani for Nuclear Talks

By AFP

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President Vladimir Putin held a surprise meeting with Ali Larijani, top adviser to Iran's supreme leader on nuclear issues, to discuss Tehran's nuclear program in the Kremlin on Sunday.

Moscow has a cordial relationship with Iran's clerical leadership and provides crucial backing for Tehran but did not swing forcefully behind its partner even after the United States joined Israel's massive bombing campaign on Iran in June.

Larijani "conveyed assessments of the escalating situation in the Middle East and around the Iranian nuclear program," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said of the unannounced meeting.

Putin had expressed Russia's "well-known positions on how to stabilize the situation in the

region and on the political settlement of the Iranian nuclear program," he added.

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Separately, a German diplomatic source told AFP on Sunday that Britain, France and Germany are planning to hold fresh talks with Iran on its nuclear program in the coming days.

Iran's Tasnim news agency also reported that Tehran had agreed to hold talks with the three European countries, citing an unnamed source.

Last week, Russia slammed a story by U.S. news outlet Axios citing anonymous sources that said Putin had "encouraged" Iran to accept a deal with the United States that would prevent the Islamic republic from enriching uranium.

Iran has consistently denied seeking a nuclear weapon, while defending its "legitimate rights" to the peaceful use of atomic energy.

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