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Russian Lawmakers Headed to Washington for Meetings, State Department Says

By Mack Tubridy

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The U.S. Capitol dome at dusk, in Washington, D.C. **Graeme Sloan / Sipa USA**

A group of State Duma lawmakers is set to meet members of Congress on Thursday, while a separate, previously unreported "federal government delegation" will visit the U.S. Institute of Peace on Friday, a State Department spokesperson told The Moscow Times.

Alexei Chepa, a lawmaker from the A Just Russia party, had told Russian media this week that a group of "four or five" lawmakers could travel to Washington in the coming days.

However, Chepa said "several details" regarding the trip still needed to be finalized due to the fact that Russian lawmakers are under U.S. sanctions for backing the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

A State Department spokesperson, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that talks

between Russian and U.S. lawmakers would take place on Thursday.

Anonymous sources in the State Duma told Russian media earlier that Vyacheslav Nikonov, a member of the ruling United Russia party, is set to lead the group.

In addition, the State Department spokesperson said a separate "federal government delegation" would visit the U.S. Institute of Peace on Friday, a meeting that has not been previously reported.

The spokesperson did not say which officials would take part in that meeting.

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The U.S. Institute of Peace, a congressionally funded non-profit focused on conflict resolution, was rebranded with U.S. President Donald Trump's name in December.

The Trump administration is reportedly considering using its Washington headquarters as the base for the Board of Peace, which President Vladimir Putin said Russia could join.

Asked about the planned Washington trip, the Kremlin said Wednesday that it welcomed "any efforts to revive dialogue with the United States."

A Just Russia party leader, Sergei Mironov, was less cordial about the decision to send a parliamentary delegation to Washington, telling reporters: "I'd rather send a missile at them."

In January, Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, a Florida Republican, said she had received authorization from the State Department for four Russian lawmakers to meet with members of Congress to discuss Ukraine peace talks.

That meeting was initially expected to take place in late January.

Luna said last year that Congress was also exploring the possibility of talks with Russian lawmakers on UFOs, though she did not provide details on the possible format, date or location of the talks.

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