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CIA Director Makes Rare Visit to Moscow

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CIA Director John Ratcliffe. **Anna Moneymaker / Getty Images via AFP**

CIA Director John Ratcliffe arrived in Moscow on Tuesday aboard a U.S. military transport plane, Axios and CBS News reported, with sources familiar with the trip saying that the intelligence chief was slated to hold a series of "meetings" in the Russian capital.

News of the rare visit broke just hours after the Kremlin told journalists it had no information about a Boeing C-17 Globemaster landing at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport.

Flight-tracking data from Flightradar24 showed the large U.S. military transport plane flew from Joint Base Andrews near Washington, D.C., stopping in Riga, Latvia, on Aug. 23 before continuing to Moscow on Tuesday.

U.S. officials have not officially commented on the visit. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow did not respond to a request for comment.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later confirmed the visit in remarks to The Washington Post, saying the purpose of Ratcliffe's trip was for "contacts between security services," not for a meeting with President Vladimir Putin. He did not provide further details.

An anonymous source told The Kyiv Independent that the United States asked Ukraine to halt its strikes on Moscow and St. Petersburg ahead of Ratcliffe's trip. The source said Ukraine would be briefed on the American intelligence chief's meetings in Russia.

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The last time a CIA director visited Russia was in November 2021, just months before President Vladimir Putin ordered the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. At that meeting, former Director William Burns met with Nikolai Patrushev, who was then serving as secretary of Russia's Security Council.

Since his appointment in January 2025, Ratcliffe has maintained regular contact with his Russian counterpart, SVR chief Sergei Naryshkin.

Ratcliffe's visit marks the first known trip to Russia by a senior American official since U.S. special envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met with President Vladimir Putin in January to discuss Ukraine peace negotiations.

U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed to broker an end to Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. However, the American president has struggled to bring Moscow and Kyiv toward a compromise, as both sides ramp up airstrikes deep inside each other's territory this summer.

In July, sources told Politico that FBI Director Kash Patel was also planning a trip to Russia later this year.

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