

Russia Withdraws Envoy to Qatar After Airport Attack

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Russia said it was downgrading relations with Qatar and withdrawing its ambassador after he was beaten by customs officials at Doha's airport last month, causing possible difficulty over a major energy deal between the two countries.

Moscow has "made the decision to downgrade relations with Qatar," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani by telephone, a ministry statement said Monday.

"Russian Ambassador [Vladimir] Titorenko will leave Qatar after finishing his course of treatment in the coming days," added the statement, referring to the medical care he was receiving following the physical assault.

The Qatari Foreign Ministry could not be reached for comment.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Titorenko was beaten on Nov. 29 when he passed through customs upon returning to Qatar from a business trip to Jordan.

A complaint sent by the ministry to Qatar on Nov. 30 demanding an apology received no reply, the statement said.

Qatar said last month that it was in negotiations to take a stake in an Arctic liquefied natural gas project under development by No. 2 Russian gas producer Novatek.

The project, in Russia's northern Yamal Peninsula, envisions developing the South Tambei field located in the Arctic area. Resources from the condensate and gas field are expected to produce 5 million tons of LNG per year when production starts in 2016 and reach 15 million tons per year in 2018.

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