

Putin Says Prague's Accusations Against Russia 'Absurd': Kremlin

By [AFP](#)

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President Vladimir Putin on Monday dismissed as "absurd" Prague's accusations against Moscow after Czech authorities accused the Russian secret services of being behind a deadly arms depot blast in 2014.

In a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Putin "commented on the current state of Russian-Czech relations, emphasizing the absurd nature of Prague's accusations and actions against Russia", the Kremlin said in a statement.

Tensions have escalated between the two countries after Prague accused Russian military intelligence earlier this month of being behind the explosion in the east of the Czech Republic, which left two people dead.

Czech police are seeking two men in connection with the blast, along with a second non-fatal explosion in the Czech Republic in 2014.

The men have also been identified as suspects in the 2018 poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English town of Salisbury in 2018.

After Prague expelled 18 Russian diplomats over the allegations, Moscow retaliated by kicking out 20 Czech embassy staff.

The Czech government has further said it will slap a ceiling on the Russian embassy workforce, which means dozens of staff will have to leave by next month.

Earlier Monday, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the accusations of Russian involvement in the blast as "completely unfounded", adding that they caused "extreme harm" to bilateral ties.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for his part said the European Union should respond to the "confused" and "emotional" comments coming from officials in the bloc.

Last week, Czech Interior Minister Jan Hamacek asked his partners in the EU and NATO to expel Russian diplomats in solidarity, leading neighbouring Slovakia as well as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to announce they would expel a total of seven Russians.

Russia responded in kind, leading to a wave of expulsions that have embroiled Russian and European diplomacy.

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