

# *Russian President Vladimir Putin Decides Not to Expel U.S. Diplomats*

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Moscow, December 30 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has decided not to expel U.S. diplomats in reprisal for Washington's recent sanctions. The Russian president told reporters in Moscow: "We will not create problems for U.S. diplomats. We will not expel anyone."

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov proposed to expel 35 U.S. diplomats in retaliation for a similar move by Washington. The ministry also asked President Putin to ban diplomats from using a holiday home located in western Moscow and a warehouse in the north of the Russian capital in reaction to U.S. President Barack Obama's decision to close two Russian compounds.

On Thursday, Barack Obama ordered a series of new sanctions against Russia as well as the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats, accusing them of being spies.

The U.S. president had also imposed sanctions on two Russian intelligence agencies over allegations that they had interfered in the 2016 presidential election in the US by cyber attacks. Russia has strongly denied the hacking accusations.

Putin slammed the sanctions as a "provocation aimed to further undermine Russian-American relations." He regretted that Obama was ending his term in such a way. He further said in the statement published on the Kremlin's website that Moscow would watch the policy of President-elect Donald Trump when he takes office next month to decide on ties between the two countries.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev also regretted the new U.S. sanctions, saying on his official Facebook page that Obama was ending his term in "anti-Russia agony."

Meanwhile, the TASS news agency quoted the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying that 96 Russians, including expelled diplomats and their families, were expected to leave the U.S. due to the sanctions.

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