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NATO, Russia Expel Diplomats

TWO DIPLOMATS AT RUSSIA'S PERMANENT MISSION TO NATO STRIPPED OF ACCREDITATION, REPORTEDLY IN CONNECTION WITH ESTONIAN SPY SCANDAL; MOSCOW CALLS MOVE A PROVOCATION, RUSSIA'S NATO ENVOY VOWS 'COOL, CONSIDERED' BUT CERTAIN RESPONSE

RUSSIA AND NATO ENTER INTO UNDIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. (By Vladimir Solovyov. *Kommersant*, May 4, 2009, p. 1. Condensed text:) . . . Relations between Russia and NATO, which are already at odds over the alliance's plans to conduct military exercises in Georgia in May, could deteriorate even further. The reason for the latest conflict was a *démarche* by the alliance's leadership, which last week revoked the NATO accreditation of two Russian diplomats attached to Russia's permanent mission – political section chief Viktor Kochukov, 63, and attaché Vasily Chizhov, 24. . . .

The sanctions against the Russian diplomats were first reported in the *Financial Times*, which wrote on Thursday [April 30] that the Russians were suspected of “engaging in activity that is incompatible with diplomatic activity.” According to the newspaper, NATO decided to expel Mr. Kochukov and Mr. Chizhov in connection with a major spy scandal involving a high-ranking Estonian official, Herman Simm, who shared NATO secrets with Russia and was sentenced in his homeland to 12 years in prison. After the article was published, the NATO leadership officially acknowledged that Viktor Kochukov and Vasily Chizhov had been stripped of their accreditation.

The alliance's decision drew a high-strung response from Moscow. “This is a blatant provocation against two diplomats from Russia's permanent mission to NATO, whom functionaries of the alliance's security service, on a completely fabricated pretext and without any coherent explanations, want to expel from Brussels,” the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated last week.

Russia's permanent representative to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, also described the sanctions against his subordinates as a provocation, promising that Moscow's response would be “cool and carefully considered.” Mr. Rogozin recounted the details of the incident in a conversation with *Kommersant* yesterday, saying that he has reason to believe that it is “more than just a spy scandal.”

“NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer gave me the unpleasant news right after the meeting of the Russia-NATO Council, in the presence of the head of the alliance’s security service, Michael Ivanoff of the United States,” Mr. Rogozin recounted. According to the Russian envoy, that was unethical, since it deprived him of the opportunity to announce and discuss the information at the meeting, at which the envoys of all the NATO countries were present.

The allegations against diplomats Kochukov and Chizhov “don’t stand up to criticism,” Dmitry Rogozin said. “Viktor Kochukov is a senior diplomat whom virtually everyone at NATO knows very well. Vasily Chizhov, on the other hand, is a newcomer – he recently graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and began working at the NATO mission at the same time as I did. Prior to that, he worked at the Foreign Ministry’s central office,” Dmitry Rogozin continued. “When I heard Scheffer say that they were being expelled over the Simm case, at first I thought he was joking. This indicates that NATO’s security service showed an extreme lack of professionalism and went off half-cocked – like a bad detective who catches an innocent man and declares him a murderer.” Mr. Rogozin also called attention to the fact that Mr. Ivanoff was appointed as head of the security service on the recommendation of former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice.

When asked what actions the Russian side plans to take, Mr. Rogozin said that “a response will definitely follow, and it will affect bilateral relations between Russia and the alliance.” . . .

Meanwhile, Mr. Kochukov and Mr. Chizhov are scheduled to return to Moscow from Brussels this week. In accordance with procedure, NATO must officially notify the Belgian authorities that the diplomats have been stripped of their accreditation to the alliance, and then the Belgian Foreign Ministry will decide whether to declare them *persona non grata*. “I think it’s almost a done deal,” Dmitry Rogozin said.

ACTION AGAINST RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS COINCIDES WITH RUSSIA-NATO COUNCIL MEETING IN WHICH NATO SPOKESMAN SEES ‘POSITIVE SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE,’ ROGOZIN SEES ‘HEATED DEBATE’; NOVAYA GAZETA’S MINEYEV: DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND ITS NATO, EU ‘PARTNERS’ DUE TO DIFFERENT VALUE SETS

CONTACT IS MADE – WITH SPARKS. (By staff correspondent Aleksandr Mineyev. *Novaya gazeta*, May 6, 2009, p. 4. Condensed text:) Brussels – Official contact between Russia and NATO has been restored. The Russia-NATO Council met at the ambassadorial level [on April 29 – **Trans.**] after an eight-month hiatus. Russia’s ambassador, permanent representative Dmitry Rogozin, should have been happy about the event, which he had been portraying in advance to the media as a victory. But when he returned to his second floor office in the Manfred Wörner Building, where reporters were waiting for him, he didn’t look quite right. He was sullen and, contrary to his usual self, almost laconic. We did not yet know why.

The first official political meeting between Russia and NATO since the Georgian war paled in comparison to what transpired just minutes after the meeting ended. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer summoned Rogozin to his office and informed him that two of his diplomats had been stripped of their accreditation: senior adviser Viktor Kochukov and

attaché Vasily Chizhov. The latter is also the son of another Russian ambassador in Brussels – permanent representative to the European Union Vladimir Chizhov.

The news about the diplomats would come out later, when the Financial Times published information leaked by someone in NATO. For now the focus was on the council meeting. Official NATO spokesman James Appathurai received about a dozen reporters who were interested in hearing about it. He spoke, carefully considering his words and pointedly not naming any countries (everyone is equal in the Russia-NATO Council). But when he said “the majority,” few doubted that “the minority” was Russia.

He noted the “desire of all participants to move forward” and the “positive spirit of compromise.” It follows from his words that Moscow also made a contribution to this positive spirit. It presented proposals on reviving the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty), from which it withdrew more than a year ago. This promises to be the main topic of dialogue in the Russia-NATO Council. The second topic will be Afghanistan. Then it will be possible to discuss Dmitry Medvedev’s well-known proposals on a European security architecture and the problems of the Far North.

“We will focus on areas where dialogue can be productive, not on deadlocked disagreements and philosophical debates,” he said, describing NATO’s position. That translates to mean that today’s Russia and its “partners” do not have very much in common, but cooperation is necessary to ensure global security.

The view from Moscow is different: NATO’s losses are Russia’s gains, and Moscow must do everything possible to one-up its partner. NATO officials described their refusal to engage in pointless arguments as “pragmatism” and were unwilling to return to a debate over who was more right or wrong in the August war. “For them that is pragmatism, but for us it’s a double standard,” Rogozin said.

He assessed the meeting as a “heated debate.” . . . NATO officials talked about general security and countering common threats. Rogozin placed more emphasis on the national interests “that Russia has and that are very pronounced.”

Sources in the European Union do not rule out the possibility that the expulsion of the two diplomats from Russia’s NATO mission, a move that was connected with the February spy scandal in Estonia, was a coordinated action by the alliance and the EU (perhaps it wasn’t by chance that attaché Chizhov was chosen). The Kremlin has been feeding the public stories about the relatively good European Union and the evil NATO bloc. But the players are the same in both (Merkel, Sarkozy, Brown and Berlusconi). They simply live in a different value system, and that system is what the Russian leadership can’t manage to establish contact with.

LATYSHEV: IMPLICATING RUSSIA IN SPY SCANDAL COULD BE NOD TO NATIONS THAT OPPOSED RESUMING RUSSIA-NATO TIES; IT’S VERY UNLIKELY CHIZHOV WAS REALLY A SPY; RUSSIA IS BOUND TO RESPOND IN KIND, WITH NEW CHILL ENSUING BETWEEN RUSSIA, NATO, NO ‘RESETTING’ OF RELATIONS WITH WASHINGTON

NATO IS PUSHED UNDER THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. (By Aleksandr Latyshev. Izvestia, May 6, 2009, p. 1. Condensed text:) There has been no resetting in relations between Russia and the North Atlantic alliance: It was learned yesterday that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has decided not to go to Brussels for a planned meeting of the Russia-NATO Council [on May 19 –

Trans.]. The reason is obvious – the recent spy scandal. In late April, NATO officials revoked the accreditation of two diplomats attached to Russia’s permanent mission to NATO – senior adviser Viktor Kochukov and attaché Vasily Chizhov. And yesterday evening the Belgian Foreign Ministry informed the head of the mission, Dmitry Rogozin, that they are being expelled from the country.

Why was a scandal needed precisely now, on the eve of Lavrov’s meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (he is flying to the US on May 6) and in the run-up to US President Barack Obama’s planned visit to Moscow this summer? Izvestia tried to find out why Brussels (read “Washington”) decided to trigger a new round of confrontation with Russia at a time when, against the backdrop of nice-sounding words about “resetting,” relations were on the verge of returning to normal after the military conflict with Georgia.

Our diplomatic sources in Brussels have their own theory about what happened. When a decision to resume relations with Moscow was made at the NATO foreign ministers’ meeting in early March, Estonia and the Czech Republic strongly objected. They were persuaded to change their minds, however, during private bilateral consultations with Clinton – but in exchange for a promise that Russia would be implicated in a spy scandal. And that is exactly what happened. In a conversation with Rogozin, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that the expulsion of our diplomats was a response to the recent scandal involving high-level Estonian official Herman Simm, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison on charges of spying against the alliance and Estonia on Russia’s behalf.

This whole “exchange” is only a theory, of course. But it appears quite plausible.

Whatever the case may be, under the circumstances Russia simply has to react. “I think the response will be tougher than this boorishness,” Rogozin conjectured. He did not name any specific candidates for “getting the boot,” however. But some sources say that the first nominee will most likely be the director of the NATO Information Office in Moscow, Isabelle François, who holds a Canadian diplomatic passport. . . .

Why are the Americans doing this? A joke is making the rounds in Washington’s corridors of power: “What’s the difference between Rice and Clinton? Just that one is a brunette and the other is a blonde.” . . .

As far as spy scandals are concerned, they never arise spontaneously. And once one starts, just try to prove that you’re not a spy. Another layer of intrigue is added to the story of Kochukov and Chizhov by the fact that the latter is the son of Russia’s permanent representative to the European Union, Vladimir Chizhov. “This is also a slap in the face to his father,” Rogozin observed yesterday. The father, by the way, has already responded for his son, declaring that the diplomats’ expulsion was an “inept and poorly disguised” provocation. Of course, because of the post he holds, he is expected to respond this way to attacks by adversaries, but in this case there is every reason to agree with the elder Chizhov.

One can argue ad infinitum about how ethical it is to appoint a son to a post in the same city where his high-ranking father works. But experts who are veterans of the special services told Izvestia that they could say with an enormous degree of probability that if Vasily had indeed been an intelligence agent, he would not have been assigned to work in a country where his hypothetical downfall could affect the work of the elder Chizhov – a very prominent diplomat who held the post of deputy foreign minister before coming to Brussels. Moreover, gone are the days when the difficult job of an intelligence agent (even one with a Foreign Ministry “cover”) was considered prestigious for the son of a high-level career diplomat. This type of service imposes too many restrictions and obligations. An elite family and a top-notch education can

give a young person a chance to end up in Brussels anyway and to pursue a career without being “under oath.”

This high-profile spy saga will most likely have predictable consequences – there will be a new chill between Russia and NATO, while relations between Moscow and Washington will simply remain “frozen.” For the time being, things will go no further than pronouncements about the magic “reset button.” So Clinton will still have to prove to skeptics that there is a big difference between her and Rice. Even though Clinton is actually a bottle blonde.

MOSCOW REVOKES ACCREDITATION OF TWO NATO DIPLOMATS; BOTH HAPPEN TO BE CANADIANS BUT CANADA’S PM DOES NOT SEE MOVE AS RETURN TO COLD WAR; VN: ACUTE PHASE OF SCANDAL IS OVER, BOTH SIDES ARE SCALING BACK HARSH RHETORIC

CANADIANS ANSWER FOR NATO. (By Boris Yunanov. *Vremya novostei*, May 7, 2009, p. 1. Condensed text:) The diplomatic furor that erupted between Russia and NATO over the expulsion from Brussels of two diplomats from Russia’s permanent mission to the alliance spilled over to relations between Moscow and Ottawa yesterday. The Russian Foreign Ministry responded to the alliance tit for tat, stripping two of its representatives of accreditation and, therefore, of the right to work in Moscow. They are Isabelle François, director of the NATO Information Office in Russia, and her colleague Mark Opgenorth.

By sheer coincidence, they are both citizens of Canada, one of NATO’s 28 member countries. Canadian Ambassador to Russia Ralph Lysyshyn was summoned to Smolensk Square [i.e., the Russian Foreign Ministry] to be informed of this “forced decision.” NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer expressed regret over these “counterproductive measures.” Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada [DFAIT] also expressed dissatisfaction. Russian Ambassador to Ottawa Georgy Mamedov was summoned to the DFAIT offices. The situation was partially defused by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. He said that he does not regard the expulsion of the two Canadian diplomats from Moscow as a return to the “cold war” era, but “it’s not the ideal situation either.”

Moscow’s tough reaction to NATO’s démarche was completely predictable. Before now, not a single diplomat from Russia’s permanent mission to the alliance had ever been expelled. But a few days ago the Belgian authorities and the NATO leadership made a decision to do just that. Moscow interpreted this as an alarming precedent for which there had to be consequences. The predictable nature of Moscow’s retaliatory moves was also noted yesterday by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: “These are the laws of the genre. Our NATO partners, at least those who initiated the expulsion of our diplomats, could not have expected anything different.”

Russia, according to the minister, is still committed to partnership with the North Atlantic alliance. The same applies to the work of the Russia-NATO Council, the first session of which at the ministerial level had been scheduled for May 19 in Brussels. But Russia has refused to participate in it as a sign of protest against the expulsion of its diplomats. Lavrov recalled in this regard that when the council was established, it was based on a number of principles, “primarily the principle that no one should try to strengthen his own security at the expense of the security of others.” The minister believes that the recent “provocations” were orchestrated by people who “want to consign that principle to the grave.”

Moscow has no intention of putting up with such actions, as is indicated by Sergei Lavrov's intention to "discuss the entire complex of Russia's relations with NATO" during his visit to Washington, where he is to meet today with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. During the talks, the parties will also discuss the situation in the Caucasus.

Moscow is making no secret of the fact that the alliance has upset Russia – not only by its expulsion of our diplomats but also by the military exercises it is currently conducting on Georgian territory. . . .

Nevertheless, the most acute phase of the diplomatic war appears to be over. Yesterday, Russia's permanent representative to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, proposed putting an end to it once and for all. He linked the scandal to the existence of two forces within the alliance: One is interested in partnership with Moscow, while the other wants to remain in "continuous conflict" with it, trying to ensure unity within the alliance's ranks by using the image of Russia as an enemy. The permanent representative did not say which of the two forces he believes will ultimately prevail.

However, after the expulsion of the Canadians, Moscow "clearly struck a conciliatory tone," a Russian diplomatic source observed in a conversation with Vremya novostei. According to him, despite what was said at the height of the scandal, no one "is going to postpone the session of the Russia-NATO Council indefinitely or put it on the back burner or do anything else along those lines." Moreover, the Canadian diplomats were subjected to a mild form of expulsion: They were not declared *persona non grata*, but were merely stripped of their accreditation, which legitimizes their presence in Russia. Our source is certain that "no one is going to deport Isabelle François within 24 hours. During the four-plus years that she's been working in Moscow, many of our diplomats have established good working contacts with her." The Belgian Foreign Ministry also used mild forms of expulsion against the two Russian diplomats. . . .

Isabelle François was unavailable for comment yesterday. But the NATO Information Office in Moscow told Vremya novostei that information contacts between Russia and NATO would not be affected. . . .

Still, the expulsion of the Canadian diplomats could have negative consequences – not only in Russia's relations with NATO, but also in the Canadian area of Russia's foreign policy. "The fact that the officials being expelled are Canadians is happenstance, but it could be used by certain political forces in Canada to whip up anti-Russian sentiments," Yelena Komkova, a leading expert at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of the US and Canada, told Vremya novostei. In her view, "the premiership of Conservative Stephen Harper certainly hasn't had the best effect on Canadian-Russian relations," which, according to the Canadian press, "have hit their lowest point in a decade." . . .