

Beat: Politics

Senior Dutch diplomat attacked at residence in Moscow

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USPA News - A senior Dutch diplomat was beaten by unknown assailants at his residence in Moscow on Tuesday evening, just days after the Dutch government apologized to Russia for arresting and detaining a Russian diplomat in violation of his diplomatic immunity. The attack happened on Tuesday evening when Onno Elderenbosch, the deputy chief of the Dutch embassy in Moscow, was returning home to his fourth-floor apartment on Povarskaya Street in the Russian capital.

He was forced to take the stairs after noticing the elevator in the building was not working and was then met by two men posing as electricians who wanted to check if the electricity was working in his apartment. Once Elderenbosch opened the door to his apartment, the men pushed him inside and knocked him to the floor before using duct tape to restrain him. Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for Russia's Investigative Committee, said the attackers ransacked the apartment before fleeing the scene. The unidentified men also used lipstick to draw a heart symbol pierced with an arrow on a mirror in the hallway, accompanied by the letters "LGBT" which refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The Dutch government is a strong supporter of LGBT rights and previously criticized Russia for its stance on the issue, which includes a controversial ban on LGBT "propaganda." "Given the evidence, the investigating authorities of the Main Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the city of Moscow have opened a criminal case under Part 2 of Article 139 of the Criminal Code," Markin said, referring to a charge of illegal entry by the use of violence. Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans said Elderenbosch sustained minor injuries but was doing well. "The Netherlands asks for clarification from the Russian authorities regarding this incident," he said. "Our people should be able to work safely there and I want the assurance from the Russian authorities that they will take their responsibility in this regard." Ward Bezemer, a spokesperson for the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry, said Timmermans had summoned Russian Ambassador Roman Kolodkin to explain the incident. The minister also called Elderenbosch on late Tuesday evening to discuss the attack, but Timmermans said the deputy chief was doing well. Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said the Russian government "regrets" the attack, which he described as a deplorable incident. "Russian authorities are taking all necessary measures to find and arrest the persons involved in this crime," he said. "The Russian side is ready to work closely with its Dutch partners for a full clarification of the incident." Tuesday's attack is the latest incident during Russian-Dutch Bilateral Year to celebrate the longstanding relationship between the two countries. Earlier this month, Russian president Vladimir Putin demanded an apology from the Netherlands after Dutch police briefly detained a Russian diplomat over concerns from neighbors who believed his children were being maltreated. The Dutch government apologized to Russia last week for violating the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, saying the Russian diplomat enjoyed full immunity and inviolability. "At the same time I have a personal understanding for the actions of the officers involved, who acted from their professional responsibility for a situation they encountered." Relations between the two countries were already strained by the detention of 30 Greenpeace activists in Russia last month. The Dutch government launched legal action earlier this month to free the activists, two of them Dutch citizens, who were charged with piracy after using a Netherlands-flagged Greenpeace ship during a protest on an Arctic oil rig.

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