

Russia tells UK to drop sanctions rhetoric or expect short talks in Moscow

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia told Britain on Wednesday to drop its sanctions rhetoric when its foreign and defence ministers fly to Moscow for talks amid tension over Ukraine, or else face the likelihood that their meetings will be short.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss are due to travel to Moscow this week amid a standoff over a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine that has fuelled fears that Moscow may attack.

Russia, which has made a sweeping set of security demands of the West, including a formal veto on Ukraine ever joining NATO, denies any such plan. Western governments have threatened major sanctions if Moscow invades.

Russia's ambassador to London, Andrey Kelin, said Moscow was interested in the talks if Britain had constructive proposals to make in response to Moscow's security demands, Russia's TASS news agency reported.

"If they're coming to Russia to threaten us again with sanctions then it is fairly pointless: we read everything, see everything, know and hear. In this case, the dialogue and conversation in Moscow will be probably fairly short," he said.

(Reporting by Anton Kolodyazhnyy; writing by Tom Balmforth; editing by Andrew Heavens)

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