

Upper Brookville Mayor unaware of Russians returning to mansion

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This Upper Brookville mansion owned by the Russian government and targeted for closure by the Obama administration in retaliation for alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election was closed Friday, Dec. 30, 2016.

(Credit: NBC New York)

Amid a report that the U.S. government is considering allowing the Russians to return to their compound in Upper Brookville, town officials say the Russian government made a routine request in April for summer passes for Town of Oyster Bay beaches.

The Washington Post reported Wednesday that the Trump administration is moving toward returning to Russian officials access to the 14-acre Russian-owned estate in Upper Brookville, as well as to a compound in Maryland.

The mayor of Upper Brookville said Thursday he is unaware of any plan by the U.S. government to allow Russian officials to return to the estate that was ordered closed in the waning days of the Obama administration.

Mayor Elliot Conway said he contacted the State Department Thursday and “we haven’t been notified they’re returning....We expect a heads-up from the State Department in advance if the Russians return.”

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Thursday that “the U.S. side said that in the near future it will hand over proposals to us on how to settle the situation,” according to a report from the Russian news agency TASS. “So far, we haven’t received any proposals from the U.S. side.”

Russia may demand compensation for “seizing Moscow’s diplomatic compounds in the United States,” TASS reported.

The Obama administration on Dec. 29 ordered the closure of the two estates in response to alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election and harassment of U.S. diplomats in Russia.

The request for beach passes came in an April 11 letter from the Manhattan address housing the Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations, said town spokesman Brian Devine.

The May 10, 2016, town board resolution approving last year’s beach-pass request allows diplomats affiliated with the mission to use town beaches with no fee.

“Right now the consideration is to offer them passes at resident rates,” town spokeswoman Marta Kane said in a statement.

Devine said he had not seen the letter and did not immediately know whether it specified that the Russian government was seeking beach access for the diplomats living in Upper Brookville. There also is a Russian-owned estate in Glen Cove, which has remained open.