

Nassau LONG ISLAND

# Upper Brookville estate used by Russian government remains locked

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The gate at the Russian mission in Upper Brookville remains padlocked and under U.S. State Department control on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017. Photo Credit: Newsday / David Olson

An Upper Brookville estate owned by the Russian government remains under U.S. State Department control a month and a half after the Obama administration ordered it closed in retaliation for alleged Russian cyberattacks, the village's mayor said.

Mayor Elliot Conway said in a statement Tuesday that he has been in contact with the State Department about the 14-acre estate and "nothing has changed. The gate is padlocked and the property remains under State Department control."

Nikolay Lakhonin, press secretary for the Russian embassy in Washington, D.C., declined to comment but referred Newsday to a Jan. 19 briefing in Moscow by Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

The statement called the "confiscation of property ... a gross violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations."

The statement also said that “according to our data and press reports, unidentified persons, accompanied by the police, broke the locks on the fence and entered the property. All this is clearly a violation of diplomatic immunity and ownership rights.”

Lakhonin did not respond to a question on whether “unidentified persons” refers to State Department or other U.S. government personnel.

A thick chain and padlock were wrapped around bars of the black metal gate on Wednesday, but it’s unclear whether they were put there by Russian government officials as they were leaving on Dec. 30 or by police or U.S. government employees afterward.



Nassau  
Russian-owned mansion on LI closed

Chief Richard Smith of the Old Brookville Police Department, which patrols Upper Brookville, said “there have been no incidents at all” at the estate since the State Department secured the property on Dec. 30. He said the State Department told him there is 24-hour security at the site.

The lock on the gate is a State Department lock, Smith

said. He said he is unaware of anyone breaking a Russian lock to gain entry.

In an email, a State Department official said: “The Department of State has taken the necessary and appropriate steps, in keeping with our responsibilities, to secure and maintain the property.”

The White House ordered the closure of the estate in Upper Brookville and another in Maryland on Dec. 29 in response to alleged Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election and harassment of U.S. diplomats in Russia. The properties were vacated the next day. Thirty-five Russians were expelled from the country.

The Soviet Union bought the mansion and surrounding property in 1952 to house the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, according to a Sept. 18, 1952, Newsday article.

The Soviets had earlier bought a mansion in nearby Glen Cove. That property, called Killenworth, was not affected by the Dec. 29 closure order. Glen Cove city spokeswoman Lisa Travatello said in a statement that “as far as we know there is no change at Killenworth and it remains open.”



AERIAL PHOTOS--December 31, 2016--Upper Brookville, NY--An aerial view of the Upper Brookville mansion owned by the Russian government and targeted for closure by the Obama administration in retaliation for alleged Russian cyberattack interference in the 2016 United States presidential election. The Upper Brookville property was one of two "recreational compounds" that the federal government ordered closed Friday 12/30/16. Nassau County assessment records state the brick and stone house is a "Russian Federation Mission." The house, with a market value of \$9,350,400, has 36 rooms and an in-ground pool, records show (Kevin P. Coughlin/All Island Aerial.com) Photo Credit: ©Kevin P. Coughlin/ALLislandAer / Kevin P. Coughlin

The day after the Upper Brookville estate was shuttered, a Long Island operator of catering and banquet halls, Butch Yamali, said he wanted to buy the property and turn it into a resort geared toward North Shore residents. Yamali said Wednesday that the Russian government hasn't responded to repeated inquiries about purchasing the property.

Potential purchasers of the property face hurdles from the village, including a requirement that an 11,000-square-foot "residence building" and outdoor swimming pool built several years ago be demolished. The village board's 2008 approval of a special-use permit for the additions states that only government entities with "diplomatic immunity" can keep the addition and pool.

### **RUSSIAN MANSION**

The Russian-owned Upper Brookville mansion is called Norwich House. The two-story, 18,929-square-foot brick house was built in 1918 and has an in-ground pool, according to Nassau County land records.

It is the former home of Gov. Nathan Miller, who served in 1921 and 1922 and "established the home as a North Shore social center during the 1920s and '30s," according to a Sept. 18, 1952, *Newsday* article.

The article says the Soviet Union purchased the estate in 1952 to house Valerian A. Zorin, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations.

Nassau County assessment records state that mansion sits on 14 acres and has a market value of \$9,350,400.