

Former U.S. Diplomat 'Barred From Russia'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A retired U.S. diplomat and expert on the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act was banned from entering Russia earlier this month, The New York Times reported.

Moscow-based Thomas Firestone, who works for Baker & McKenzie law firm, was declared persona non grata when returning to Russia from a trip abroad on May 5, the report said Sunday.

No official explanation for the incident was available.

Baker & McKenzie confirmed the expulsion in a statement cited by The New York Times, which did not name the reasons for Firestone's blacklisting.

The press office of the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, when reached by telephone on Monday, asked for an e-mailed request for comment.

The Russian intelligence services unsuccessfully tried to recruit Firestone in March, The New York Times said, citing an unidentified source familiar with the case. No independent confirmation of the report was available.

Firestone spent two terms as resident legal adviser at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow until joining Baker & McKenzie in 2012. He is an expert on Russian business practices, including illegal activity. In 2010, the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service gave him an award for his contribution to "combating cartels and unfair competition."

The U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act punishes companies working in the U.S. for paying bribes abroad. High-profile examples in Russia included drugmakers Pfitzer and Eli Lilly and automotive concern Daimler, which have been fined tens of millions of dollars in recent years for bribing Russian officials and agencies. No one was prosecuted in Russia over those cases.

Baker & McKenzie removed its profile of Firestone and his contact information from its website.

"Thank you for visiting Baker & McKenzie. This page is no longer available," said a brief note on the page where the profile had been published.

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