

Russia Orders U.S. Embassy Staff Cuts in Sanctions Retaliation

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Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov **Kremlin Press Service**

Russia has ordered the United States to reduce its diplomatic and technical staff at its embassy in Moscow and diplomatic missions in other Russian cities in response to a U.S. Senate vote to impose tougher sanctions on Russia, the Foreign Ministry [said](#) on Friday.

“We kindly ask the U.S. to adjust the headcount of its diplomatic and technical staff by September to exact parity with the number of Russian diplomats and employees in the U.S.,” the ministry wrote in its statement. “This means the overall number of personnel employed in American diplomatic and consular institutions in the Russian Federation will be reduced to 455.”

Moscow warned that if Washington takes new unilateral steps to cut the number of Russian diplomats in the United States, its retaliatory moves would be reciprocal. According to Deputy Chairman of the State Duma, Sergei Zheleznyak, the U.S. currently has 1200 diplomatic employees in Russia.

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The ministry announced in its statement it was also ousting U.S. embassy personnel from warehouses and cottages in Moscow starting in August.

"We reserve the right to respond with other measures we might find appropriate," the Ministry added.

Moscow said the move came in response to a U.S. Senate vote on July 27 that would impose harsher sanctions on Russia if it is signed into law by U.S. President Donald Trump.

"The passage of the new law on sanctions shows with all obviousness that relations with Russia have become hostage to the domestic political battle within the U.S.," the Foreign Ministry said. "The latest events show that in well-known circles in the United States, Russophobia and a course toward open confrontation with our country have taken hold."

Presidential spokesperson Dmitri Peskov said Friday morning he had "nothing to add" to the document issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Of course, these measures are impossible without the president's approval," he said.

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First deputy chairperson of the Defence and Security Committee of the Federation Council Franz Klintsevich told the [Life](#) outlet that Russia's response to the Senate vote was "just the first steps."

"No doubt, others will be taken," the senator said, adding that some of Russia's responses may be "unexpected."

First deputy chairperson of the State Duma, Ivan Melnikov, responded to the Foreign Ministry's statement saying: "Russia's reaction [to the U.S. Senate vote] is absolutely correct. The measures look adequate: they are firm, yet there is some room left."

A U.S. Embassy spokesperson told The Moscow Times in an emailed comment: "We have received the Russian government notification. Ambassador Tefft expressed his strong disappointment and protest. We have passed the notification back to Washington for review."

The measures are in response to the White House's decision in December last year to confiscate two Russian diplomatic compounds in New York and Maryland and expel 35 Russian diplomats from the country. The decision was taken in retaliation for Russia's alleged hacking of institutions related to the U.S. presidential election.

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