The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

If U.S. Slows Visa Processing, Moscow Will Reciprocate — Russian Politician

August 01, 2017



A Russian politician has said Moscow will reciprocate with longer wait times if the U.S. Embassy slows travel visa processing for Russian citizens.

"Obviously, if such a slowdown in [the issuing of] visas takes place, the reasons would have nothing to do with staff cuts. So Russia is ready to take reciprocal diplomatic measures," Igor Morozov, a member of the Federation Council's international affairs committee, was cited as saying by the state-run RIA news agency.

"As is customary in diplomatic practice, the period for issuing Russian visas to Americans will also be increased."

Morozov's comments follow reports that the ousting of more than 700 U.S. diplomatic staff by Moscow would affect processing times.

"Russian citizens will be hit hardest by smaller U.S. staff at the embassy," Michael McFaul,

the former Ambassador to Russia under the Obama administration, said on Twitter.

He added wait times would "increase dramatically," saying in a separate tweet that "Russians should expect to wait weeks if not months to get visas to come to the U.S."

The New York Times on Tuesday reported that the issuing of visas to Russian travelers "is likely to slow to a glacial pace." It also cited an employee at a Russian company that helps Russian get visas as saying many more Russians' applications were being rejected.

In written comments to The Moscow Times the U.S. Embassy distanced itself from McFaul's prediction saying the tweets represented his personal views.

"It is still too early to try and guess how [the measures] will affect consular operations but it's certainly possible that it could reduce them," the embassy said. It called the measures to reduce the number of diplomatic staff "uncalled for."

Russia's Foreign Ministry announced on Friday it was ordering cuts to U.S. diplomatic staff in Russia to 455 employees by September, in response to a move by U.S. Congress to codify sanctions against Russia. The White House said on Friday President Donald Trump would sign the law.

Related article: Russia Orders U.S. Embassy Staff Cuts in Sanctions Retaliation

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/08/01/if-us-slows-visa-processing-moscow-will-reciprocrate-russian-politician-a58541