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Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Blasts U.S. Embassy in Moscow

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Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova **Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS**

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova lashed out at the U.S. Embassy in Russia late last night in response to Russian media reports the embassy had started to reject travel visas for Russians.

"Goodbye, America?" Zakharova wrote on Facebook. "Immediately after Russia responded [to American sanctions by expelling American diplomatic staff], the Americans started to scare Russian citizens by complicating and delaying the issue of American visas."

Russian media reports have claimed that the U.S. Embassy is deliberately rejecting travel visas in response to Russia expelling American diplomatic staff. The measure was announced last Friday in response to a U.S. Congress vote to codify sanctions against Moscow, which were signed into law by U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday.

Though Zakharova says the question is "indecent" for a diplomat, she asks: "'What were,

and are, hundreds of American employees doing in Russia?"

If U.S. visa processing is delayed, she said, it will be because of a deliberate decision by Washington and the U.S. Embassy's complicated visa procedure, which involves a personal interview with each applicant.

“I really like the argument that this messy system is meant to ensure ‘proper security,’” she wrote.

The U.S. Embassy has rejected the claim that it has started rejecting travel visas for Russian applicants, as The Moscow Times reported earlier Wednesday.

“The claim that the U.S. Mission to Russia has deliberately increased the number of visa refusals has nothing to do with reality,” American embassy spokesman Maria Olson told Interfax.

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