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U.S. Embassy Vacates Moscow Premises, Denies Visa Refusal Claims

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Embassy officials leave their estate in Moscow's Serebryany Bor Park **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

In accordance with a Russian government decree, American diplomats on Tuesday announced that they had completely vacated two premises in Moscow, the Interfax news agency reports.

The embassy was required to leave the dacha in Serebryany Bor as well as a diplomatic warehouse in an industrial area in southern Moscow's Dorozhnaya Street by Aug. 1.

The measure was announced by Russia last week in retaliation against a proposal by the U.S. Congress to codify sanctions against Moscow, which are expected to be signed into law by U.S. President Donald Trump.

"The U.S. Embassy was able to gain access to the dacha in Serebryany Bor, and we removed the remaining furniture, kitchen utensils and barbecue facilities, as well as equipment for the children's playground," embassy spokesperson Maria Olson was cited as saying by Interfax.

"In addition, we removed everything from the U.S. Embassy's warehouse."

The embassy also rejected claims made by some Russian media that it had started rejecting travel visas for Russian applicants, ahead of massive staff cuts to its diplomatic staff imposed by Moscow.

"We are aware of numerous media reports that attempt to analyze the impact of the reduction of embassy and consulate staff in Russia," Olson was cited as saying in a separate Interfax report. "It is still too early to draw conclusions about how the reduction might impact consular work, but it is possible that this will lead to a decrease in the speed of consular activity."

"However, the claim that the U.S. Mission to Russia has deliberately increased the number of visa refusals has nothing to do with reality," Olson told Interfax.

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