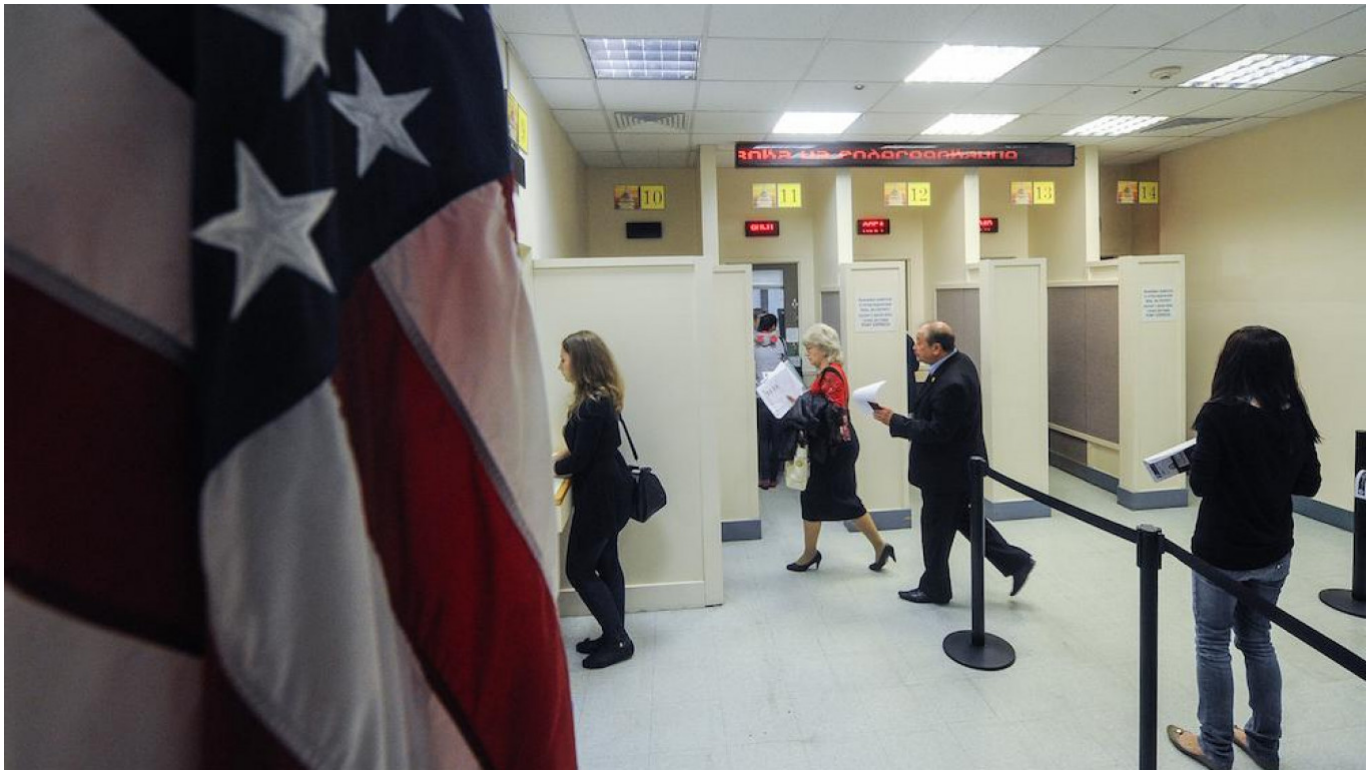
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. Embassy in Moscow Suspends Non-Immigrant Visas for Russians

August 21, 2017



Alexandra Mudrats / TASS

The U.S. Embassy in Russia is temporarily suspending processing non-immigrant visa applications in response to Russia's expulsion of American diplomats.

"Due to the Russian government-imposed cap on U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia, all non-immigrant visa operations across Russia will be suspended on Aug. 23," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement published Monday morning.

"Operations will resume in Moscow on Sept. 1; visa operations at the U.S. consulates will remain suspended indefinitely," the statement added.

Non-immigrant visas are issued to travelers who want to visit the U.S. temporarily, as opposed to applying for permanent residency in the country.

Related article: After Sanctions, There's No Way Back (Op-ed)

The move is just the latest in a series of tit-for-tat measures between Russia and the United States as part of an ongoing diplomatic spat over fresh sanctions codified by U.S. President Donald Trump on Aug. 2.

After the U.S. Congress overwhelmingly voted in favor of the sanctions bill, the Russian government announced on July 28 it would cut the number of U.S. diplomatic staff in Russia to 455.

Russia's Foreign Ministry has also barred U.S. embassy staff access to a warehouse and recreational property in Moscow's suburbs from the beginning of August.

"Russia's decision to reduce the United States' diplomatic presence here calls into question Russia's seriousness about pursuing better relations," reads the statement on the U.S. Embassy page.

Consular and embassy services for U.S. citizens will not be impacted by the measures, the embassy added in a fact sheet published alongside the statement.

Related article: Russian Emigres in New York Unfazed by Sanctions Fallout

Russian citizens who have already paid their visa fees will not be eligible for refunds, according to the fact sheet, but the payments will remain valid for one year.

Russia's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova previously said that if Russians were subjected to delays following the staff cuts at the U.S. Embassy, Russia would introduce retaliatory wait times for U.S. citizens applying for Russian visas.

Are you Russian and waiting for a visa to travel to the United States? If today's news affects you, we want to hear from you. Get in touch at: general@themoscowtimes.com

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/08/21/us-embassy-suspends-non-immigrant-visas-for-russians-a58709