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U.S. Orders Closure of Russian Consulate as Relations Spiral

August 31, 2017



The United States on Thursday ordered the closure of a Russian consulate, describing it as a response to “unwarranted” actions taken by Moscow.

The order will see Russia's San Francisco consulate shuttered and embassy operations scaled back in Washington D.C. and New York by Sept. 2.

"The United States has fully implemented the decision by the government of the Russian Federation to reduce the size of our mission in Russia," the U.S. Department of State announcement says. "We believe this action was unwarranted and detrimental to the overall relation between our countries."

Embed:

U.S. implemented unwarranted #Russia decision 2 reduce mission size & we

> require action by them to achieve their desire 4 parity @statedept pic.twitter.com/0wgGC7m5kX
>
> — Heather Nauert (@statedeptspox) August 31, 2017

The move follows a Russian Foreign Ministry order for the U.S. to scale back the number of diplomatic staff in Russia to 455.

By Friday, Sept.1, around 700 staff working for the U.S. diplomatic mission to Russia will be dismissed.

Link: Russia Will Respond 'Appropriately' to U.S. Order to Close Consulate in San Fransisco, Says Official

"In the spirit of parity invoked by the Russians, we are requiring the Russian Government to close its Consulate General in San Francisco, a chancery annex in Washington D.C., and a consular annex in New York," the U.S. State Department's statement said.

It added the move would allow both countries to keep three consulates, adding: "while there will continue to be a disparity in the number of diplomatic and consular annexes we have chosen to allow the Russian Government to maintain some of its annexes in an effort to arrest the downward spiral in our relationship."

Besides the embassy in Washington D.C., Russia has four consulates in the United States; in Seattle, San Francisco, Houston and New York.

Related article: Russia Reacts to the Closure of Its San Francisco Consulate

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said earlier this month that media reports of an impending closure of a Russian consulate were unsubstantiated.

Zakharova said it was a "bluff" intended to impress "those who don't understand the core of the issue." Several years ago Washington turned down Moscow's offer to open a fourth consulate in Russia, she added. "The Americans were invited to open a fourth consulate on the territory of the Russian Federation, and they did not do it."

Russia's newly appointed ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov arrived to Washington D.C. on Thursday, just in time for the latest episode in the ongoing U.S.-Russian diplomatic spat.

"Now we need to sort this out calmly, very calmy and act in a professional manner," he told journalists, according to the state-run TASS news agency, right after landing. "To cite Lenin, we don't need any hysterical outbursts. My comrades and I will fulfill our work in a professional manner."

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