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Consulate Closure a 'Dark Day in American Diplomacy,' Says Zakharova

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Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Sunday described Washington's decision to shutter Moscow's consulate in San Francisco and trade missions in New York and Washington as a "hostile act" and a "gross violation of international law, including the Vienna Conventions."

"We call on the American authorities to come to their senses and immediately return Russian diplomatic facilities," the Foreign Ministry said in an online statement.

"Otherwise, the entire blame for the continuing degradation of relations between our countries, on which the state of global stability and international security largely depends, will lie on the U.S."

On Sunday evening, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova told the state-run Rossia 1 television channel that Sept 2., Russia's deadline to close the consulate, was a "dark day in the history of American diplomacy."

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Asked how Russia planned to respond, Zakharova said: "the issue is not in my competence and not on today's agenda."

Zakharova was also cited in the Kommersant newspaper this weekend as saying that Russia "reserves for itself the right to respond with measures."

The consulate property in San Francisco was searched by the FBI on Saturday after the Russians were given 48 hours to vacate the buildings. Russian diplomats can remain in their apartments until Oct. 1, Sergei Petrov, the Russian consul general, said.

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Last December, outgoing President Barack Obama expelled 35 Russian diplomats from the United States and also ended Russia's use of recreational complexes outside of New York and Washington.

Russia responded in July, after Congress voted on fresh sanctions against Moscow, ordering the U.S. to cut its embassy staff in Russia by 755, and closing access to the Moscow embassy's cottages and a storage facility.

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