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U.S. State Dept. Denies Breaking Down Doors at Russian Properties

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The Russian Consulate in San Francisco **Beck Diefenbach / Reuters**

U.S. officials did not break down doors or conduct searches at seized Russian diplomatic properties, contrary to Moscow's claims, a State Department official told the state-run TASS news agency.

"The Russian government's accusations that U.S. officials broke doors at these facilities, and that the FBI conducted searches there, don't correspond to reality," the official said.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Saturday summoned a U.S. Embassy official to protest the searches "without the presence of Russian officials." The ministry also accused U.S. officials of threatening to "break down the entrance door" to the consulate in San Francisco.

The State Department ordered Moscow to shutter its consulate in San Francisco and annexes in New York and Washington by Sept. 2.

The unidentified State Department official told TASS on Tuesday that Russian Embassy

officials had been invited to survey the San Francisco, New York and Washington D.C. facilities together with State Department officials.

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In its statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry said the searches at the Russian Trade Representation office in Washington could be used by U.S. "special services" to stage "an anti-Russian provocation by planting compromising items."

The State Department responded by saying that the inspections were meant to "secure and protect the facilities and to confirm that the Russian government had vacated the premises," according to a statement circulated to the media.

Russian Foreign Ministry footage published on its Facebook page on Sunday claimed to show FBI officials searching its San Francisco office. The footage is captioned "the FBI in the Consulate General of Russia in San Francisco."

Embed:

"We are polite people and will open them ourselves, why destroy our property," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova wrote on Facebook.

The State Department ordered the closure of the Russian consulate in San Francisco "in the spirit of parity," after Russia instructed the United States to cut its diplomatic staff in Russia by hundreds of employees.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday the Foreign Ministry would dispute the seizures of diplomatic missions in court, and reserved the right to order the expulsion of additional U.S. diplomats.

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