

San Francisco Air Pollution Watchdog Could Punish Russian Consulate for 'Burning Garbage'

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Screenshot CBS News / Youtube

San Francisco's air quality watchdog has served the former Russian consulate a notice of violation for burning "garbage" without permission, the local CBS television station [reports](#).

Plumes of black smoke were seen coming out of the consulate building on Sept. 1, a day before it was set to close on the orders of the U.S. State Department.

The U.S. State Department ordered Russia to vacate its San Francisco consulate and scale back activities at annexes in Washington D.C. and New York by Sept. 2 after Russia told the U.S. diplomatic mission to cut its staff by hundreds of people.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova [said](#) the smoke coming from the consulate was the result of efforts to "preserve the building," including "closing the windows, lowering the curtains, cutting off the water, turning off the lights, closing the

doors, throwing away the garbage."

But some media reported Russian diplomats might be burning documents before vacating the property.

"We're issuing a violation for burning garbage," Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) spokesman Ralph Borrmann was quoted as saying Tuesday.

Related article: ['Not Electing a Pope' — Why Was Smoke Coming Out of Russia's San Francisco Consulate?](#)

BAAQMD's Borrmann told CBS Bay Area that its legal department would contact the Russian diplomats to "settle the violation" in a process that could take "anywhere from several weeks to months."

Citing the "thickness and blackness" of the smoke that day, he said "it was clear it was some kind of garbage or material that isn't permitted for burning."

"It was clear they weren't burning seasoned dry wood."

BAAQMD spokeswoman Lisa Fasano [told](#) the San Jose-based Mercury News that the notice had been mailed to the shuttered consulate, hoping it would be forwarded to the appropriate address.

"It's unclear if we will receive any response," Fasano said.

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