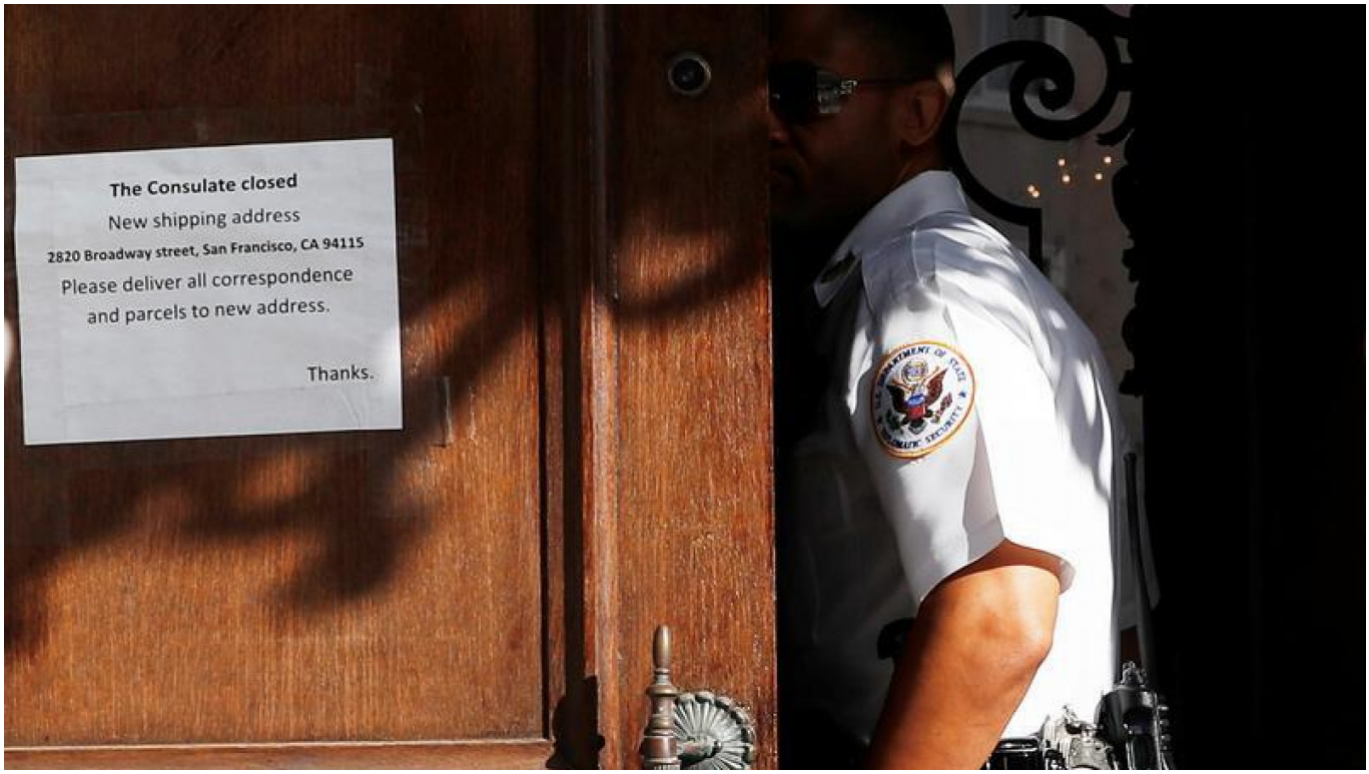
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U.S. Denies Breaking Into Seized Russian Consulate

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Stephen Lam / Reuters

U.S. officials did not break into a Russian consulate building in San Francisco, the State Department said on Tuesday.

Moscow threatened retaliation on Monday after it said U.S. agents broke into the San Francisco consulate building's residential section. It warned that Washington had "essentially agreed to the possibility of similar treatment of their representative offices in Russia."

The building and several other consular properties in the U.S. were vacated by Russian diplomatic staff on Washington's orders early September. The move came after Moscow instructed the U.S. diplomatic mission in Russia to cut its staff by hundreds of people in a series of tit-for-tat measures.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said during a press briefing Tuesday that

Washington issued an Oct. 1 deadline for people remaining in the "office-type space" to vacate.

She reiterated previous State Department statements to local media that U.S. officials performed a walk-through at the two-story brownstone building.

"We did not break locks, no FBI involved," Nauert said.

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"This is Diplomatic Security along with the foreign missions office. What they do is they just walk through, look around. The purpose of that is to make sure that people are no longer living there, and they conducted that and they completed it."

Russia's Foreign Ministry published a series of video updates of the "invasion" into the diplomatic property on its Facebook page.

The state-run TASS news agency and the Kremlin-backed RT television network also ran live feeds of the seized property.

One of the captions to the ministry's videos claimed that U.S. officials had broken a lock to the residence gate, allowing the "intruders" to gain entrance.

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