

Russia Protests Flag Removal at Seized San Francisco Consulate

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Russian Consulate in San Francisco / Russian Foreign Ministry

Russia's Foreign Ministry has issued a statement of protest after American authorities reportedly took down several Russian flags from a seized consulate in San Francisco.

U.S. State Department officials searched the Russian general consulate in San Francisco earlier this month after Russian diplomatic staff were forced to vacate the property on Washington's orders.

Russia was ordered to vacate its San Francisco consulate and two other consular annexes after Moscow instructed the U.S. to reduce its diplomatic mission by hundreds of people. The demand followed a vote to tighten sanctions on Russia.

Moscow called the move a response to the previous U.S. administration's seizure of two Russian diplomatic compounds and the expulsion of dozens of Russian diplomats in

December 2016 over allegations of election interference.

In an English-language statement on its Facebook page late on Wednesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry [said](#) it had sent a protest note "to the American side" against the removal of several Russian flags from the San Francisco property.

"We consider such a move as an extremely unfriendly step," the post, which was accompanied by photos of the former consulate building stripped of flags, said. "We demand an immediate return our state symbols to their place and prevents such incidents in the future."

In an interview on state television, Russia's new Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov [called](#) the taking down of the flags "upsetting."

"We demand an immediate halt to the systematic seizure of our property in the United States accompanied by abusive actions," he said.

The state-run TASS news agency [quoted](#) an unnamed State Department official as saying that the flags were removed with due respect to state symbols and are safely stored inside each of the seized buildings.

The Russian Foreign Ministry [said](#) earlier this week that the option of sending home 150 more U.S. diplomatic personnel is still on the table.

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