

U.S. Vows to Return Flags From Seized Russian Consulate

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Russian Consulate in San Francisco / Russian Foreign Ministry

The United States will return the flags removed from a seized consulate in San Francisco to Russia, the State Department [said](#).

Moscow has [protested](#) the flag removals and demanded the immediate return of its state symbols “to their place.”

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said at a Thursday briefing that the Russian flags in San Francisco had been lowered with respect and stored safely inside the properties.

“Russian authorities have been told that we would be able to return those flags certainly at their convenience,” she said.

U.S. officials searched the Russian consulate in San Francisco earlier this month after Russian diplomatic staff were forced to vacate the property on Washington’s orders. The expulsions

were in response to Moscow's demand that U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia be cut by the hundreds.

Related article: [U.S. Orders Closure of Russian Consulate as Relations Spiral](#)

Nauert defended the seizure of the San Francisco building and two other consular annexes as "perfectly legal." Russia [disagrees](#) and has hired a law firm to represent its interests in the dispute.

"We did this with a lot of thought in place and we did it in a judicious fashion," Nauert added. "There is nothing that was inappropriate or done wrong in any kind of fashion."

Russia demanded that the United States cut its diplomatic staff after Congress voted last summer to [tighten](#) sanctions against Russia.

This week the Russian Foreign Ministry [said](#) that the option of sending home an additional 150 U.S. diplomatic personnel remains on the table.

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