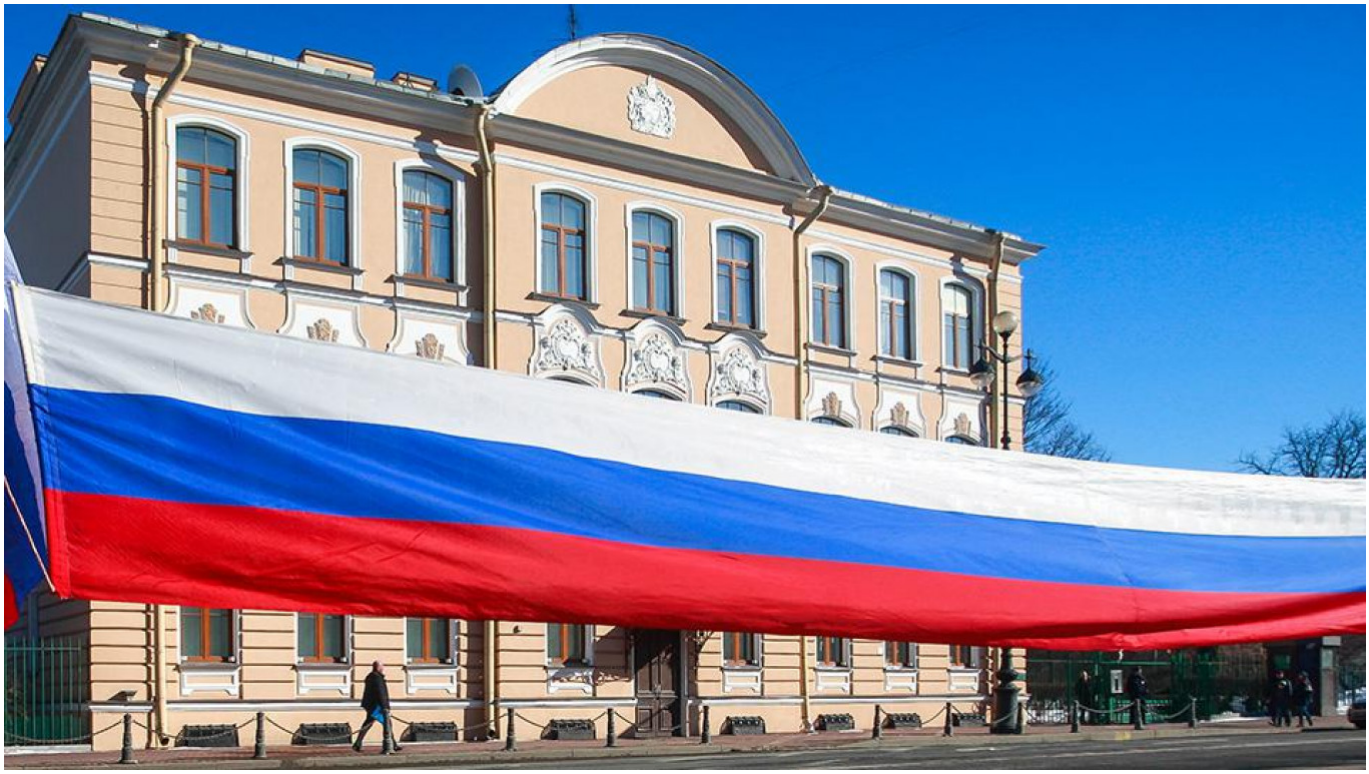
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British Consulate in St. Petersburg Closes After 26 Years in Operation

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Roman Pimenov / TASS

Britain's General Consulate in St. Petersburg officially shut its doors on Thursday. The closure is the aftermath of diplomatic tensions between London and Moscow following the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy in England earlier this year.

Britain expelled 23 Russian diplomats in late March in response to a nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Britain, in what was believed to be an assassination attempt ordered by Moscow. In response, Russia announced its own expulsion of 23 British diplomats and said that the U.K. consulate in St. Petersburg would have to close.

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“Unfortunately, this chapter in our book is coming to an end, this was not our choice,” Britain’s Ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

“It’s a difficult moment in our relations. After the attack in Salisbury, we were forced to reevaluate our relations with the Russian government,” he said.

Laurie pointed out that the British consulate was open in Russia’s second largest city for 26 years.

"The people to people links that we have built are even more important in these difficult times, and they will endure," Bristow said.

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