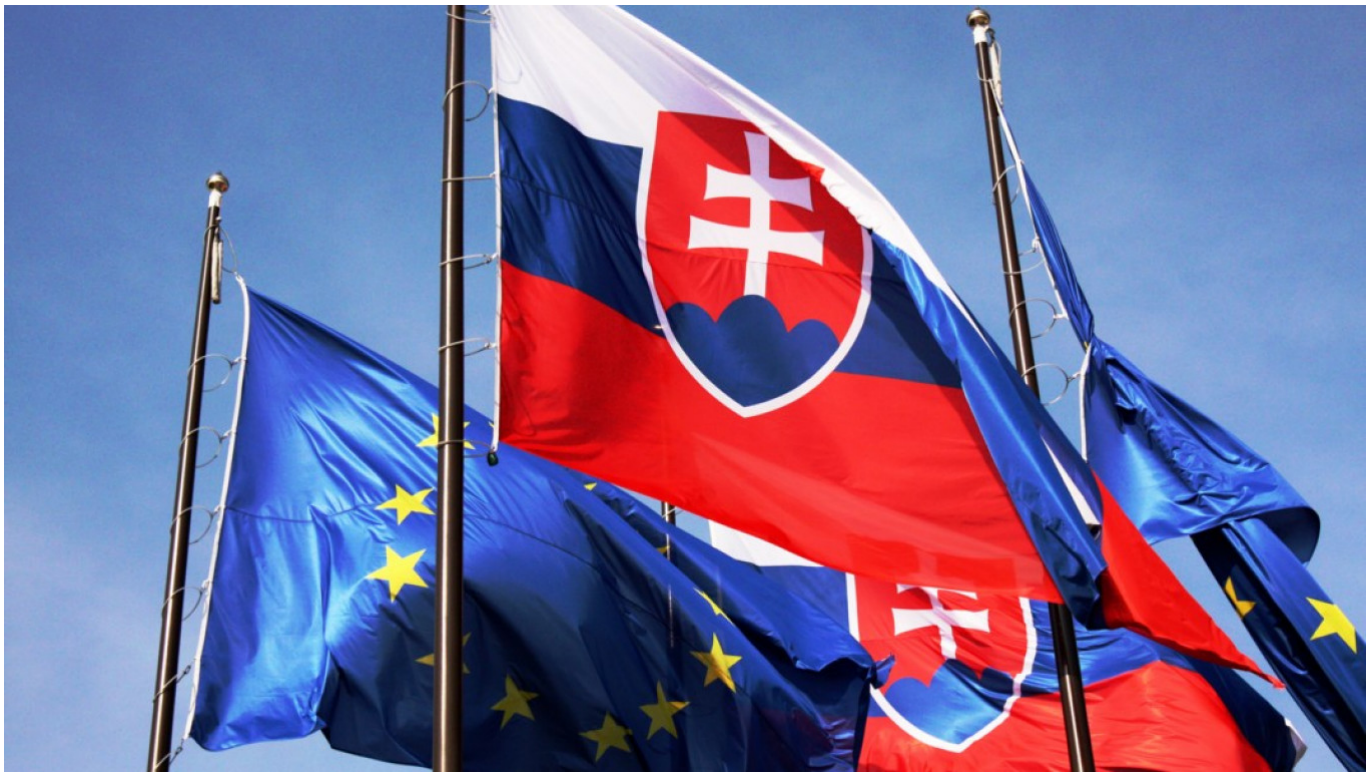
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Slovakia Expels 3 Russian Diplomats

By AFP

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Slovakia said Monday it had expelled three Russian diplomats for "a serious crime," with local media reporting a possible link with the killing of a former Chechen rebel in a Berlin park last year.

"I can confirm that a decision has been taken to expel three employees of the embassy of the Russian Federation in Slovakia," Juraj Tomaga, head of the foreign ministry's press department, told AFP.

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"According to information from the Slovak intelligence services, their activities were in conflict with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," he said.

Tomaga also said that a visa issued by the Slovak consulate in St. Petersburg in Russia had

been "misused and a serious crime was committed in the territory of another NATO and EU member state."

The spokesman did not provide further details.

Russia said it would respond to the expulsions "in a similar way," Russian media reported.

Slovakia's Dennik N daily said the Slovak consulate in St. Petersburg last year issued visas that allowed into the European Union a Russian citizen who was later suspected of killing Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a Georgian national, in Berlin's Kleiner Tiergarten park.

German police arrested a suspect shortly after the shooting and prosecutors have accused Russia of ordering the murder — a claim dismissed as "unfounded" by Moscow.

Investigative website Bellingcat earlier named the suspect as Vadim Krasikov, saying he was a contract killer who grew up in Kazakhstan when it was part of the Soviet Union before moving to Siberia.

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