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Russia Expels Two Dutch Diplomats in Tit-for-Tat Move

By AFP

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Artyom Geodakyan / TASS

Moscow said Monday it was expelling two Dutch diplomats from the country in response to a "provocative" decision by the Netherlands in December to remove two Russian embassy staff over spying allegations.

Moscow summoned Dutch charge d'affaires Joost Reintjes, the foreign ministry said in a statement, telling him that two Dutch diplomats had two weeks to leave the country.

"The Russian side, guided by the principle of reciprocity, decided to expel from Russia two diplomatic employees of the embassy of the Netherlands in Moscow," the statement said.

Related article: Dutch Expel 2 Russian Diplomats for Spying – Intelligence Service

In December Dutch security officials said the country was expelling two alleged Russian spies

working as diplomats after "rolling up" a spy network that targeted hi-tech industries.

The Russian officers from the foreign SVR intelligence service had built up a "substantial" network of sources that could have damaged national interests, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) said.

The Russian foreign ministry said Monday the allegations were "unfounded and slanderous."

Relations between The Hague and Moscow have been strained since Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down in July 2014 over a part of eastern Ukraine held by Russian-backed separatists.

The Netherlands has said Moscow was responsible for the disaster, in which 298 people were killed, 196 of them Dutch.

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