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U.S. Slashes Visa Services at Consulates in Russia

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High tensions and Russia's 2017 personnel cap on the U.S. diplomatic mission previously prompted the State Department to consider closing its two remaining consulates in Russia. **Alexander Shcherbak / TASS**

U.S. visas and services for American citizens will only be available in Moscow after the U.S. slashed operations at its remaining Russian consulates, U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan announced Thursday.

High tensions and Russia's 2017 personnel cap on the U.S. diplomatic mission previously prompted the State Department to consider closing the two remaining U.S. consulates in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg and the Far Eastern port of Vladivostok.

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Sullivan said in a statement that the Vladivostok consulate's operations will remain suspended while the Yekaterinburg consulate will operate without visa and American citizen

services.

The changes leave the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and its consular district as the last U.S. diplomatic mission in Russia.

“Effective April 1, U.S. Embassy Moscow’s consular district will be expanded to include all of Russia,” Sullivan said in the statement on the embassy’s website.

“The Embassy will provide services to U.S. citizens across the Russian Federation. The Embassy will also provide visa services as efficiently and expeditiously as possible, given staffing constraints,” he added.

According to the statement, the U.S. mission reached the decision after talks with State Secretary Antony Blinken following a “lengthy review of the safety and security of the U.S. diplomatic mission and our personnel.”

Russia in 2018 ordered the closure of the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg in a diplomatic tit-for-tat sparked by the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Britain.

Moscow took the steps after then-U.S. President Donald Trump closed Russia’s consulate in Seattle and expelled 60 Russian diplomats from the country.

The U.S. Embassy temporarily suspended non-immigrant visa processing for several months in 2017 after Russia expelled U.S. diplomats in response to sanctions over suspected interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

The Kremlin denies meddling in U.S. elections.

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