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U.S. Embassy in Moscow to Halt Visa, Consular Services From Aug. 1

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Russia banned the embassy from employing foreign nationals when it designated the U.S. as an "unfriendly" country. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

The United States' Embassy in Moscow will suspend visa and other consular services starting Aug. 1 due to a hiring ban imposed by Russia, Ambassador John Sullivan told the independent Dozhd broadcaster Sunday.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow is Washington's last remaining diplomatic mission in Russia after it closed its St. Petersburg consulate in 2018 and downsized operations at its Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg consulates earlier this year. Russia banned the embassy from employing foreign nationals when it designated the U.S. as an "unfriendly" country in May, forcing it to cut 75% of its staff.

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"After Aug. 1, we will have very few people working here, which is why we will not be able to

provide the consular services which, as I know, both Americans and Russians need so much," Sullivan told Dozhd.

Russians will be unable to apply for visas to visit, work, do business, study or live in the United States from their home country, forcing them to apply for visas at U.S. embassies in third-party countries.

The embassy will also no longer provide routine passport services, consular reports of birth abroad and notarial services to U.S. citizens in Russia.

"This is not just an obstacle in terms of U.S.-Russia relations, this has serious personal implications for families as well as commercial implications for businesses — both in the U.S. and Russia," Sullivan said.

Russia's ban on hiring foreign staff at U.S. diplomatic missions came amid a round of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions as relations between Moscow and Washington plummeted this spring over the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and more.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to return their respective ambassadors to their posts during their June 16 summit in Geneva.

Sullivan and his Russian counterpart, Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov, returned to Moscow and Washington last week.

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