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North Macedonia Expels Russian Diplomat

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North Macedonia Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani **Gruber / BMEIA (CC BY 2.0)**

Newly minted NATO member North Macedonia has expelled its second Russian diplomat this year, Balkan media reported and Moscow confirmed Tuesday.

Citing unnamed foreign ministry sources, the Almakos news website said Monday that the Russian diplomat, an unidentified deputy military attaché, was expelled last Wednesday.

According to the Balkan Insight, North Macedonia's foreign ministry said it is "taking all appropriate measures and activities in accordance with the Vienna Convention for diplomatic relations in order to protect the national security of the Republic of North Macedonia as well as to protect the role and responsibility of the country as a member of the NATO alliance."

The former Yugoslav republic of North Macedonia joined the U.S.-led NATO military alliance last year in the face of opposition from Moscow.

North Macedonian Foreign Minister Bujar Osmani confirmed the Russian diplomat's

expulsion Tuesday, according to the Russian state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

Russia's diplomatic mission in Skopje, which also did not disclose the expelled military attaché's identity, said the diplomat had left North Macedonia 10 days before he was declared persona non grata.

The Russian mission said it was considering retaliatory steps, RIA Novosti reported.

Moscow previously took tit-for-tat measures following North Macedonia's expulsion of a Russian diplomat in May.

That expulsion from Skopje came in solidarity with the Czech Republic accusing Russia of involvement in deadly 2014 arms depot explosions that sparked a bitter diplomatic crisis between Prague and Moscow.

The Kremlin denied the claims and added the Czech Republic to its list of "unfriendly countries," which also includes the United States.

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