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Russia Closes Baltic Consulates, Expels Staff

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Olegs Anosovs (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Russia has ordered the closure of three Baltic consulates Thursday and ordered the expulsion of all their non-Russian staff in retaliation to similar moves by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Estonian and Lithuanian consulates in St. Petersburg, as well as the Latvian consulates in St. Petersburg and Pskov, will now have to close. The consuls were declared "persona non grata" and non-Russian staff "inadmissible."

"We demanded that all the aforementioned persons leave Russian territory within the same time frame as the employees of the Russian consular missions from these countries," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

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The Foreign Ministry said it had summoned the three neighboring countries' top diplomats to

“strongly protest” the previous closures of Russian consulates in five Baltic cities.

It added that the NATO and EU members’ “military assistance to the Kyiv regime and their cover-up of crimes by Ukrainian nationalists” during Russia’s invasion of Ukraine also affected the decision.

The Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian governments demanded that Russia withdraw its troops from Ukraine in their respective decisions to shut down Russian consulates.

Tit-for-tat Russian and western diplomatic expulsions have reached a 20-year high so far in 2022.

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