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40 Russian Diplomats and Embassy Staff to Leave Romania

By AFP

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A Romanian gendarme stands outside the Russian Federation embassy in Bucharest, Romania, Monday, April 26, 2021. **AP Photo/Nicolae Dumitrache/TASS**

Forty diplomats and Russian embassy staff in Bucharest were set to leave Romania on Saturday following a request from the government, with ties worsening between the two countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Eleven diplomats and 29 technical and administrative staff, accompanied by their families, "will leave Romania on board a civilian aircraft belonging to a Russian airline," the Romanian foreign ministry said.

Romanian broadcasters showed an Ilyushin Il-96 aircraft landing at Bucharest airport. It was due to take off later on Saturday, according to airport sources quoted in the local press.

The decision "reflects the current level of bilateral relations... after Moscow launched its war

of aggression against Ukraine," the Romanian foreign ministry said.

The authorities made the request on June 8, giving Moscow 30 days to comply.

Like other European countries following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO-member Romania expelled Russian diplomats suspected of espionage.

The number of staff at the Russian embassy has been slashed by more than half, Bucharest says.

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