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Moldova Expels Russian Diplomat Over Espionage Claims

By AFP

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The Russian Embassy in Chisinau, Moldova. **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

Moldova on Thursday declared an employee of the Russian embassy in Chisinau as persona non grata, in the second espionage case to emerge in the country in recent weeks.

The move came after prosecutors on Wednesday announced the detention of two officials suspected of treason and conspiring against the country.

They did not identify the officials by name, but media reports said one is the head of the legal department in parliament, while the other worked for the country's border police.

The two had "communicated" with an employee of an embassy in Chisinau since 2023, according to the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organised Crime and Special Cases, which did not identify the country involved.

Prosecutors added that one of the two Moldovan officials allegedly collected and gave the

embassy employee "information to be used against the interests of the Republic of Moldova."

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On Thursday morning, Russian ambassador Oleg Vasnetsov was summoned to the Moldovan foreign ministry over the decision to expel the Russian diplomat "as a result of specific activities... incompatible with diplomatic status," according to a ministry statement.

Vasnetsov told local media that "very unfriendly" actions had led to a further reduction in embassy personnel with "few diplomats left." Earlier, the Russian embassy denounced "artificially fuelled anti-Russian tensions".

Asked about the case on Wednesday, President Maia Sandu told local media that "the most important thing now is to make sure that this example of treason is sanctioned in the harshest way, as the law says."

It is the second espionage case involving Russia in recent weeks.

In June, an investigative journalism website wrote that a former Chief of the General Staff, Igor Gorgan, had regularly passed information to Russia, prompting Sandu to strip him of state distinctions.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Moldova has expelled dozens of diplomats and employees of the Russian embassy, frequently accusing Moscow of meddling in its interests.

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