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Moscow Expels 6 British Diplomats Over Suspected Spying

By AFP

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The British Embassy in Moscow. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) on Friday announced that the accreditation of six British diplomats had been withdrawn, accusing them of espionage and "threatening Russia's security."

"As a measure of reprisals to the multiple unfriendly acts of London, the Russian Foreign Ministry... has withdrawn the accreditation of six employees from the political department of the British Embassy in Moscow," the law enforcement agency said.

The FSB accused the diplomats of "subversive activities and intelligence" gathering, adding that it had evidence confirming London's "coordination of an escalation in the international political and military situation."

Law enforcement officials also said the British Foreign Office's Eastern Europe and Central

Asia department was coordinating activities to inflict a "strategic defeat" against Russia.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said her ministry agreed with the FSB's "assessment of the activities of these so-called British diplomats," alleging that "the British embassy has largely flouted the limits set by the Vienna Convention."

Russian state television showed images of the six diplomats, identifying them by name. It also aired footage claiming to show them leaving the country.

The British government rejected out of hand that six of its diplomats in Moscow were spies, calling the Russian accusations "completely baseless."

The Foreign Office in London indicated that it was a tit-for-tat measure after Western moves against "Russian state-directed activity across Europe and in the U.K."

"We are unapologetic about protecting our national interests," a statement read.

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