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Czech Republic Curbs Russian Diplomats' Entry

By AFP

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The Russian Embassy in Prague. **Krokodyl (CC BY 2.5)**

The Czech Republic announced Tuesday it is restricting the holders of Russian diplomatic and business passports from entering the country in what it said was an EU first, citing security concerns.

The EU is pondering curbing the movement of Russian diplomats across the Schengen free travel area.

Prague has long proposed restrictions on the movement of Russian diplomats following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

"We have imposed an entry ban on the holders of Russian diplomatic and business passports at international airports," Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky told reporters.

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He added Russians with an accreditation issued by Prague would be allowed to enter, and that the measure does not concern diplomats at Moscow's embassy in the Czech capital.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Daniel Drake told AFP the measure took "immediate effect" and that Prague was the first within the EU to adopt the measure.

Lipavsky told reporters his country would "continue to push the proposal for pan-European, pan-Schengen restrictions."

He added the European measure would "help resolve our security problem as [Russia's] diplomatic network conceals networks of agents who endanger our security here."

The Czech intelligence service BIS said in its annual report for 2024 that "Russia continued its efforts to rebuild broader espionage networks operating under diplomatic cover."

The Czech Republic, an EU and NATO member with a population of 10.9 million, has provided Ukraine with humanitarian and military aid since the Russian invasion started.

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