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Russia Expels British Diplomat Over Alleged Economic Espionage

By Mack Tubridy

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Yevgeny Messman / TASS

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Monday that it would expel a British diplomat after he was accused of being an undercover spy and engaging in economic espionage.

The FSB security service alleged earlier that the second secretary of the British Embassy in Moscow, whom it identified as Albertus Gerhardus Janse van Rensburg, had "knowingly provided false information" when obtaining permission to enter Russia.

It claimed Janse van Rensburg was involved in "subversive intelligence activities" that undermined Russia's national security.

The FSB said it had evidence that the diplomat tried to "obtain sensitive information during informal meetings with Russian economic experts."

As a result, Janse van Rensburg had his diplomatic accreditation revoked and was ordered to

leave Russia within two weeks.

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The British Embassy in Moscow dismissed the allegations and called the expulsion "completely unacceptable."

"Russia has pursued an increasingly aggressive and coordinated campaign of harassment against British diplomats, pumping out malicious and completely baseless accusations about their work," the embassy said in a statement sent to The Moscow Times.

The embassy did not identify the diplomat by name in its statement.

A Russian state TV report said Janse van Rensburg was the 16th British diplomat to be expelled from the country over the past two years.

In January, the FSB accused another employee of the British Embassy in Moscow of being an undercover spy and ordered him to leave the country.

The British government responded to that expulsion by revoking the accreditation of a Russian diplomat in London.

Relations between Russia and the United Kingdom have been at an all-time low ever since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Yet even before the war, tensions had been brewing over a slew of espionage and interference scandals, including the 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in Salisbury.

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