The Moscow Times
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Russia Tells Foreign Embassies in Kyiv to Evacuate as It Warns of 'Retaliatory' Strikes

May 07, 2026



A poster reading "Proud of Russia" in front of Russia's Foreign Ministry building. **Alexander Nemenov / AFP**

Russia's Foreign Ministry is urging governments and international organizations to evacuate their staff from Kyiv, warning of "inevitable" retaliatory strikes on the city if Ukrainian attacks against Russia this week disrupt annual Victory Day celebrations.

In a video message released Wednesday night, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow issued a formal notice to governments and organizations with a presence in the Ukrainian capital "strongly urging" preemptive evacuations due to the high probability of Russian strikes should Ukraine follow through on what she described as "criminal, terrorist designs" on May 9.

"Russian diplomatic missions abroad are currently informing their host countries and international organizations of this notice," Zakharova said. "It is not something to be

ignored. It must be taken very, very seriously."

The warning comes amid rival and at times confusing ceasefire proposals from both Russia and Ukraine. Russia, as in past years, initially announced it would unilaterally observe a ceasefire on May 8-9. Ukraine later responded by proposing its own ceasefire for May 5-6.

Those ceasefire announcements appear largely symbolic, with both sides signaling they do not intend to observe the other's truce. Russia has also threatened strikes on central Kyiv if Ukraine ignores its ceasefire.

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Ukraine has already accused Moscow of violating the ceasefire it announced for Wednesday after several people were killed in Russian attacks across the country.

"This shows that Russia rejects peace and its fake calls for a ceasefire... have nothing to do with diplomacy," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha wrote on X. "Putin only cares about military parades, not human lives."

In his evening address on Wednesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv would "respond in kind" to Russia's violations and decide its next steps accordingly.

For Russia, this week's ceasefire is widely seen as an effort to shield Victory Day celebrations from any disruption. Moscow is set to hold its annual military parade, though the event has been scaled back and, for the first time in nearly two decades, will not feature military vehicles because of the ongoing threat of Ukrainian drone attacks.

Authorities are also tightening mobile internet restrictions in Moscow and other cities. Russia's Digital Development Ministry said Thursday that mobile internet will be shut down in Moscow on May 9, and only Wi-Fi and home internet connections will work.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/05/07/russia-tells-foreign-embassies-in-kyiv-to-evacuate-as-it-warns-of-retaliatory-strikes-a92704