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Russia Orders Closure of Romanian Consulate in St. Petersburg

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The Romanian Embassy in Moscow. **Anton Kardashov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday ordered the closure of Romania's Consulate General in St. Petersburg and expelled its consul, a tit-for-tat move that comes after Russia's Consulate General in the Romanian city of Constanta was closed last month following a drone crash in the country.

"This step is a direct response to Bucharest's completely groundless withdrawal of its consent to allow the operation of the Russian Consulate General in Constanta," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In May, Romania declared the Russian consul in Constanta persona non grata as retaliation for what it said was a Russian drone crashing into an apartment in the eastern part of the country, near the border with Ukraine. A woman and a child were injured in that incident.

Days later, 56 UN members jointly denounced Russia over the drone crash, calling it "unacceptable."

President Vladimir Putin suggested the drone may be Ukrainian and accused Romania of jumping to conclusions.

On Thursday, Russia's Foreign Ministry said it summoned Romanian Ambassador Cristian Istrate to formally notify him that Gheorghe Nicolae Pahonea, Romania's consul in St. Petersburg, has been declared persona non grata, and that the consulate must close.

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