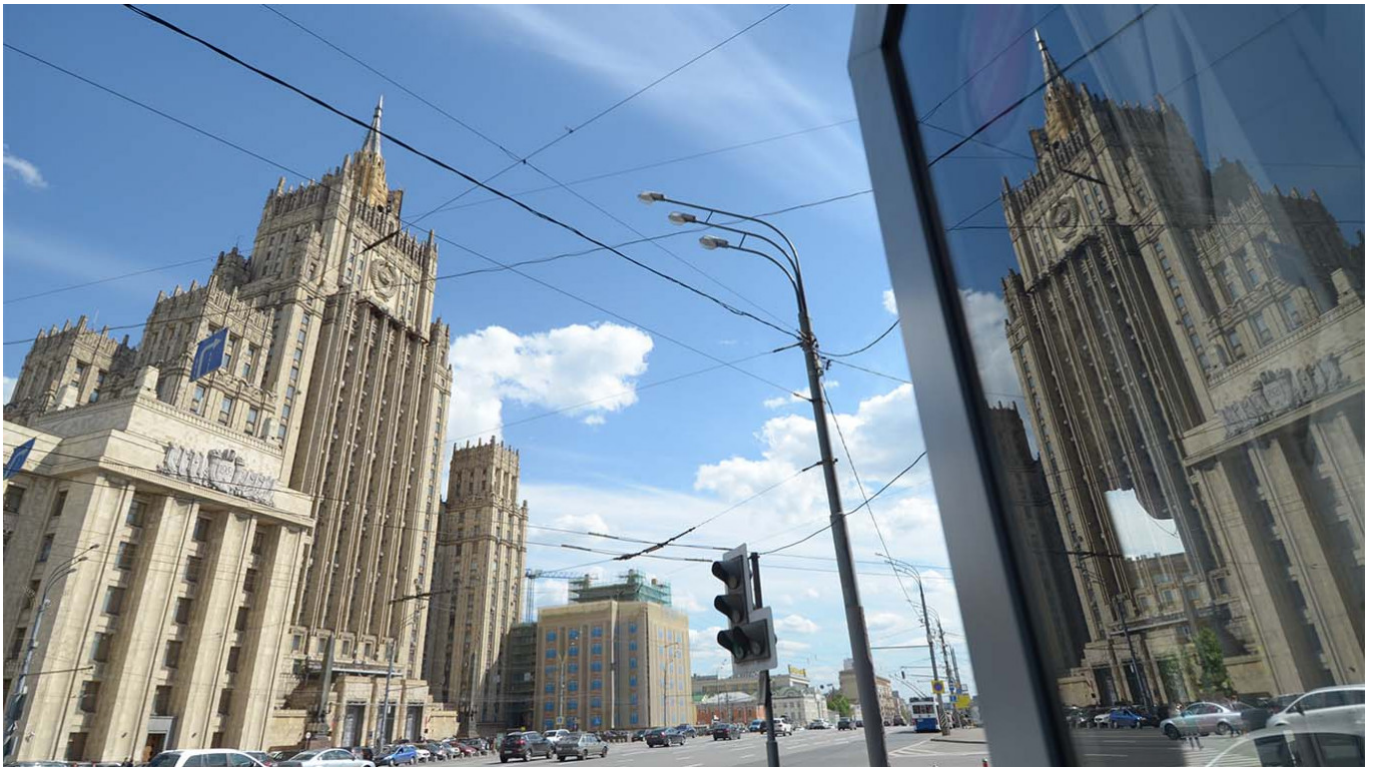


Explainer: Russia's Recent Tit-for-Tat Diplomatic Expulsions

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Russia's Foreign Ministry has expelled several diplomats. **Yekaterina Kuzmina / DIPLOMATSRBC / TASS**

Russia has been involved in several diplomatic rows over the past several months. Here's a roundup of events:

Slovakia

The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Monday it had expelled three Slovakian diplomats from Moscow after Bratislava ordered the removal of the same number of Russian foreign service staff over a “serious crime.”

Moscow dubbed Bratislava's move an “unfriendly step” that contradicted the “traditional spirit” of international ties. Slovakian media, however, linked the expulsion of the Russian diplomats to the murder of former Chechen rebel Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Berlin last year.

Norway

In late August, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared a senior Norwegian diplomat persona

non grata after Oslo expelled a Russian diplomat.

The Russian diplomat, who reportedly worked in the trade section, was suspected of harvesting sensitive information with the help of a local 50-year-old Norwegian man in exchange for “not significant sums of cash.”

The Norwegian, who claimed the harvested data was not harmful to Norway’s interests, was eventually accused of spying. Norway said the Russian diplomat’s acts were “not compatible with his status.”

Moscow blamed Oslo for taking a “destructive course” that would inevitably negatively affect the atmosphere of bilateral relations.”

Austria

Last month, Vienna accused a Russian diplomat of industrial espionage and reportedly ordered him to leave the country until Sept. 1. The Russian Foreign Ministry, “guided by the principle of reciprocity,” declared, in turn, a diplomat from the Austrian embassy in Moscow persona non grata.

The Russian diplomat had reportedly been engaged in economic espionage in a high-tech company for years. An Austrian citizen who allegedly helped him steal sensitive information identified him as his senior officer, according to Austrian media reports.

Czech Republic

In June, Moscow expelled two Czech diplomats in a retaliation move after Prague expelled Russian embassy staffers from the country over a media report about an alleged poisoning plot.

The Czech weekly media outlet Respekt broke the news earlier this year, reporting that Moscow had plans to poison Czech officials in the capital city after Prague removed a Cold War-era monument to Soviet general Ivan Konev.

The news led to the mayor of Prague and several other local officials being placed under special police protection.

Czech authorities accused a Russian embassy staffer of spreading a fake poisoning plot story and declared two Russian diplomats persona non grata.

Moscow dismissed the Respekt story as “sick fantasies” and described the expulsion of diplomats as a “hostile measure,” calling accusations against its embassy workers “absurd and baseless.”

AFP contributed reporting.

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