

# Russia Protests US Searches of Its Diplomatic Facilities

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*The Trump administration ordered the closure of Russia's San Francisco consulate, a chancery annex in Washington, and a New York consular annex - effective September 2.*

On Saturday, FBI agents searched their premises, a flagrant Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations violation.

Under Article 22(1), "(t)he premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission."

Article 22(3) states:

"The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution."

Article 29 adds:

"The person of a diplomatic agent shall be inviolable. He shall not be liable to any form of arrest or detention. The receiving State shall treat him with due respect and shall take all appropriate steps to prevent any attack on his person, freedom or dignity."

Article 30 grants the same inviolability and protection to a diplomatic agent's private residence, his or her papers, correspondence, and property.

At the same time, inviolability isn't extra-territoriality. Embassy, consular and other diplomatic grounds remain the territory of host nations.

Inviolability protects them from forced entry. Doing so constitutes a serious breach of international law.

If states want their diplomats given courtesy and respect, they're obligated to afford similar treatment to foreign representatives on their soil. They're bound under international law - something America ignores in geopolitical relations.

On Saturday, Russia's Foreign Ministry summoned US deputy chief of mission in Moscow **Anthony Godfrey** saying:

"We consider the planned illegitimate search of the Russian diplomatic property without presence of Russian officials and the said threat to break up the entrance door as an unprecedented, aggressive act, which besides may be used by the US intelligence services to orchestrate an anti-Russian provocation by planting compromising items."

"(W)e reserve the right to retaliate on the basis of reciprocity."

On Saturday, Russia's UN envoy **Vasily Nebenzya** said bilateral relations are at an

"unaffordable low level...add(ing) (there's nothing) positive (about Washington's action) not only to our relations, but also to the international situation."

Newly arrived Russian ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov can expect rough waters to navigate in his new post, operating in hostile territory.

Moscow will react "professionally and calmly" to America's latest affront, not with "hysterical impulses," he said. Tough sanctions imposed in early August didn't make things easier.

They dealt a "serious blow to bilateral relations and opportunities for effective cooperation. It is time to stop," Antonov stressed, knowing bilateral relations are likely to get worse, not better.

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