

U.S. to expel over 60 Russian diplomats: Strongest action by President Trump against Moscow since coming to office

The United States said it would expel 60 Russian diplomats, joining along with Europe countries in punishing Moscow for a nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy in Britain.

Statement from the White House Press Secretary read “The United States takes this action in conjunction with our NATO allies and partners around the world in response to Russia’s use of a military-grade chemical weapon on the soil of the United Kingdom, the latest in its ongoing pattern of destabilizing activities around the world.”

One of the strongest presidential action by Trump against Russia since coming to office. He has been severely criticized by Democrats and members of his own Republican Party for failing to be tough enough on Russia over U.S. allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. electoral system, including the 2016 presidential campaign.



A portion of the Russian Embassy complex is seen in Washington. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

“Today’s actions make the United States safer by reducing Russia’s ability to spy on Americans and to conduct covert operations that threaten America’s national security. With these steps, the United States and our allies and partners make clear to Russia that its actions have consequences” the statement added.

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British Prime Minister Theresa May, welcoming the show of solidarity, said 18 countries had announced plans to expel Russian officials. Those included 14 European Union countries. In total, 100 Russian diplomats were being removed, the biggest Western expulsion of Russian diplomats since the height of the Cold War.

Australia later confirmed it was expelling two Russian diplomats identified as undeclared intelligence officers, citing Russia’s “reckless and deliberate conduct”. New Zealand said it had no such agents operating on its shores but would expel them if it did.

The envoys and their families have been given a week to leave the United States, according to one U.S. official. Australia has issued the same deadline to its expelled diplomats.

Source: White House press release, Reuters.

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