

# *Russia expels 23 British diplomats, closes UK Consulate General in St. Petersburg*

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Moscow, March 17 (RHC)-- Russia has expelled 23 British diplomats in response to what it described Britain's "provocative actions and groundless accusations" over ex-double agent Sergei Skripal's poisoning. The British Council will also be closed.

Britain's ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on Saturday morning, where he was informed of Moscow's response to London's claims that Russia is behind the poisoning of Sergei Skripal, a former double agent, and his daughter, Yulia, on March 4 in Salisbury.

The ministry issued a statement saying 23 employees of the British embassy in Moscow have been declared persona non-grata. The diplomats must leave within a week. It also announced the operation of the British Council in Russia will be ceased given its "unregulated status."

In addition, Russia is revoking its agreement on the opening and operation of the UK Consulate General in St. Petersburg due to "disparity in the number of consulate facilities of the two countries."

The statement added: "The British side has been warned that in case further moves of an unfriendly nature towards Russia are implemented, the Russia reserves the right to take other responsive measures."

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