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EXPULSION OF SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, announced that today the U.S.S.R. Ambassador was requested to withdraw from Canada three officials of the Soviet Embassy, namely: Captain 1st Rank Igor A. Bardeev, Military, Naval and Air Attaché, Colonel Eduard I. Aleksanjan, Assistant Military Attaché, and Mr. V. I. Sokolov, chauffeur, all with the Military Attaché's office of the Embassy in Ottawa.

The Soviet Ambassador was told that despite repeated warnings and expulsions in recent years, the Soviet Embassy had persisted in permitting certain officials to abuse their diplomatic status in Canada by engaging in espionage, and that the Canadian Government would not tolerate such activities.

The case in which the three Embassy officials are implicated involved a United States citizen, employed in a sensitive position in his own country, who was in contact with the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa and who was paid by the Embassy to obtain classified information. The R.C.M.P. monitored the case. With the co-operation of the F.B.I., who were helped in their investigation in the United States by the U.S. citizen, the R.C.M.P. determined that over a period of some 16 months these Soviet officials met clandestinely with the U.S. citizen, using traditional signal arrangements and dead letter boxes in the Ottawa area, where exchanges of information took place and payments were made. This investigation was completed late last week.

Flora MacDonald noted that the present expulsions follow by less than two years the most serious case of espionage in Canada since the Gouzenko affair of 1946.

Despite the expulsion of thirteen members of the Soviet Embassy in February 1978, and the severe warnings of the Government at that time, the Embassy had resumed, within months of the 1978 expulsions, a pattern of activity violating basic standards of diplomatic behaviour.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs expressed particular concern about the use, in this instance, of the territory of Canada by the Soviet Union as a base from which to conduct espionage operations against one of our allies.