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## U.S. Bars Hungarian Officials Suspected of Corruption

By Zoltan Simon - Oct 17, 2014

The U.S. imposed travel bans on Hungarian officials and other individuals suspected of corruption, raising tensions with Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government.

The list contains fewer than 10 people, Andre Goodfriend, the U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Hungary, told reporters in Budapest today. He declined to provide names, citing privacy laws. Hungary's Foreign Ministry summoned Goodfriend asking that the U.S. share its information. The U.S. won't share its evidence, which is "confidential" and Hungarian authorities are aware of the issue, Goodfriend said.

"We always base our decisions on solid evidence," Goodfriend said. Companies doing business in Hungary lack a "non-corrupt environment."

Diplomatic clashes between the U.S. and Hungary have become more frequent since Orban swept to government in 2010 and embarked on consolidating his power. The Hungarian premier, re-elected in April, said in July that he intends to break with liberal democracy and set up an "illiberal state," citing Russia and Turkey as models.

The Hungarian government summoned Goodfriend to ask the U.S. to share its information about corrupt individuals, Judit Fulop, a spokeswoman at the Foreign Ministry, said on the ministry's website. Government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs declined to comment when reached by phone.

U.S. President Barack Obama cited Hungary among countries where non-government organizations are under pressure. The Orban cabinet is investigating Hungarian NGOs funded by Norway, suspecting them of diverting money to an opposition party, a claim the organizations have denied.

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