

Russia orders British Council out

by UPI

MOSCOW -- The Russian government has given notice to the British Council, a cultural group, it must close its 15 offices in the country by the end of the year. In the notice, the government said the group has no legal basis for teaching English and British history and traditions in Russia, a Times of London correspondent reported from Moscow. A spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry accused the council of violating tax laws, which the council denied, the report said. Relations between Moscow and London have been strained since the November 2006 killing of Russian dissident Alexander Litvinenko in London. Russia refused to extradite the chief suspect requested by Scotland Yard, and Britain in turn refused to extradite self-exiled Russian billionaire Boris Berezovsky to Russia to face fraud charges. The report said President Vladimir Putin is being vigilant about non-governmental organizations, because he suspects them of backing the pro-democracy "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine.

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