



## U.S. Sanctions on Russia: An Overview

The United States maintains sanctions on Russia related to Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine, malicious cyber activities and influence operations (including election interference), human rights abuses, use of a chemical weapon, weapons proliferation, illicit trade with North Korea, support to the governments of Syria and Venezuela, and use of energy exports as a coercive or political tool.

Sanctions against Russian individuals, entities, vessels, and aircraft (hereinafter, *persons*) may include the blocking of assets subject to U.S. jurisdiction; limits on access to the U.S. financial system, including transactions involving U.S. individuals and businesses; and denial of entry into the United States. The United States also tightly controls exports to Russia's defense and energy sectors.

### Invasion of Ukraine

Most Russian persons subject to U.S. sanctions are designated in response to Russia's 2014 invasion and occupation of Ukraine's Crimea region and parts of eastern Ukraine. The United States has imposed Ukraine-related sanctions on more than 735 persons, including about 75 designations for a wider range of malign activities (totals throughout are current as of the start of June 2021).

A series of executive orders issued in 2014 (E.O. 13660, 13661, 13662, and 13685), based on national emergency authorities and codified by the Countering Russian Influence in Europe and Eurasia Act of 2017 (CRIIEA; P.L. 115-44, Title II; 22 U.S.C. 9501 et seq.), provides a framework for sanctions on those the President determines have undermined Ukraine's security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity, or have misappropriated state assets. The E.O.s also authorize sanctions on Russian government officials and persons who operate in the Russian arms sector, other key sectors of the Russian economy, or occupied Crimea. In addition, they prohibit U.S. business, trade, or investment in occupied Crimea.

*Sectoral sanctions*, in particular, apply to specific entities in Russia's financial, energy, and defense sectors. U.S. persons are restricted from engaging in specific transactions with these entities, subject to directives issued by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. Sectoral sanctions also prohibit U.S. trade related to the development of Russian deepwater, Arctic offshore, or shale oil projects and such projects worldwide in which specified entities have an ownership interest of at least 33% or a majority of voting interests.

### Malicious Cyber Activities and Influence Operations

Sanctions imposed on Russian persons in response to malicious cyber activities and influence operations in the United States or elsewhere are based on four authorities:

- E.O. 13694, as amended by E.O. 13757 (and codified by CRIIEA), against those who engage in cyberattacks (1) against critical infrastructure, (2) for financial or commercial gain, (3) to significantly disrupt the availability of a computer or network, or (4) to interfere with U.S. election processes and institutions.
- E.O. 13848, against foreign persons who have "engaged in, sponsored, concealed or otherwise been complicit in foreign interference in a United States election."
- CRIIEA, Section 224 (22 U.S.C. 9524), against those who have engaged in activities undermining "cybersecurity against any person, including a democratic institution, or government" on behalf of the Russian government.
- E.O. 14024, against those responsible for or who have engaged in malicious cyber-enabled activities, election interference, the undermining of democratic processes or institutions, and other "harmful foreign activities" on behalf of the Russian government.

Under one or more of these authorities, the United States has designated about 170 Russian persons, including Russia's leading security agency (FSB) and military intelligence agency (GRU), as of early June 2021. Designations also include a network of persons related to Russian financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the Internet Research Agency Prigozhin reportedly financed to conduct influence operations in the United States, and Prigozhin-linked political, security, and economic operations in Africa and elsewhere.

Under Section 231 of CRIIEA (22 U.S.C. 9525), the United States also has imposed sanctions on foreign entities engaged in "significant transactions" with Russia's defense or intelligence sectors. The United States has designated Chinese and Turkish defense agencies and related persons for taking delivery of S-400 surface-to-air missile systems (as well as, in China's case, Su-35 combat aircraft).

### Corruption and Human Rights Abuse

The Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-208, Title IV; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) requires the President to impose sanctions on those he identifies as having been involved in a "criminal conspiracy" uncovered by Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky and his subsequent imprisonment and death. The act also requires the President to impose sanctions on those he finds have committed gross violations of internationally recognized human rights against individuals fighting to expose the illegal activity of Russian government officials or seeking to exercise or defend human rights and freedoms. As of May 2021, 55 persons are designated under the Sergei Magnitsky Act.

Fourteen Russian persons have been designated under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (P.L. 114-328, Title XII, Subtitle F; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note) and E.O. 13818, which address human rights abuses and corruption more broadly. At least nine Russian nationals have been publicly denied entry to the United States for significant corruption or gross violations of human rights under authorities stated in Section 7031(c) of annual foreign operations appropriations acts. Two Russian officials are subject to U.S. sanctions for the 2021 imprisonment of opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

### Use of a Chemical Weapon and Weapons Proliferation

The United States has determined that Russia used a chemical weapon in contravention of international law in the March 2018 and August 2020 nerve agent attacks on, respectively, UK citizen and former Russian GRU officer Sergei Skripal and Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny. Both findings triggered sanctions under the Chemical and Biological Weapons Control and Warfare Elimination Act of 1991 (CBW Act, P.L. 102-182, Title III; 22 U.S.C. 5601 et seq.).

CBW Act-related sanctions include prohibitions on exporting munitions and commercial goods and services that are controlled for national security reasons, arms sales, foreign military financing, and other U.S. government credit guarantee programs. Some restrictions are waived, including those on foreign aid and transactions related to government space program cooperation. Restrictions on commercial space cooperation are waived until September 1, 2021. The United States also has designated the GRU, the FSB, two GRU officers, three research institutes, and five Russian government officials for one or both attacks.

Under the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Nonproliferation Act (P.L. 106-178; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note), state-owned arms exporter Rosoboronexport and several other Russian defense entities are denied most U.S. government procurement contracts, export licenses, and trade in U.S. Munitions List-controlled items. Rosoboronexport is subject to other restrictions, as well.

### North Korea, Syria, Venezuela: Secondary Sanctions

About 20 Russia-related persons are subject to U.S. sanctions for evading U.N. sanctions restricting trade and financial transactions with North Korea. Designations apply to persons trading in oil and oil products, financial services, and exported labor, as well as for facilitating weapons of mass destruction programs.

Rosoboronexport, three Russian banks, and related persons are subject to U.S. sanctions for their support to the Syrian government. In 2018, the Administration designated four Russian persons as part of “a complex scheme Iran and Russia have used to bolster the Assad regime and generate funds for Iranian malign activity.” In 2019, the Administration designated a Russian entity and associated persons for serving as a front company in a “scheme to facilitate the [illicit transfer] of jet fuel to Russian forces operating in Syria.”

In 2019, the Administration designated a bank jointly owned by Russian and Venezuelan state-owned companies for providing support to Venezuela’s state-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.* Also subject to U.S. sanctions for operating in Venezuela’s oil sector are two subsidiaries of Russian state-owned oil company Rosneft, a related individual, and two Russian-flagged vessels and their registered owners.

### Russia’s Coercive Use of Energy Exports

Fourteen vessels and five entities are subject to U.S. sanctions for participating in construction of Russia’s Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline to Germany, pursuant to the Protecting Europe’s Energy Security Act of 2019, as amended (P.L. 116-92, §503; 22 U.S.C. 9526 note). One designated vessel and its registered owner also are subject to sanctions under Section 232 of CRIIEA (22 U.S.C. 9526). In May 2021, the Biden Administration waived new sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG, its chief executive officer, and corporate officers; Nord Stream 2 AG is a Swiss-based company that Russia’s state-owned Gazprom established to construct and operate the pipeline.

### Other Sanctions and Restrictions

Pursuant to the CBW Act and a U.S. Treasury directive issued under E.O. 14024, U.S. participation in the primary market for Russian sovereign bonds and lending of funds to the Russian government are prohibited.

The State Department identifies Russia as a government that fails to meet minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking; this “Tier 3” designation requires limits on aid and U.S. support for multilateral development loans. Defense and foreign operations appropriations also restrict assistance to the Russian government.

### Other Available Sanctions

E.O. 14024 establishes sanctions in response to Russian “harmful foreign activities,” including transnational corruption; the unlawful killing or harming of U.S. persons or U.S. ally or partner nationals; activities that “undermine the peace, security, political stability, or territorial integrity of the United States, its allies, or its partners”; and the circumvention of U.S. sanctions. The E.O. targets Russian government officials and entities (and officials’ spouses and families); persons operating in Russia’s technology, defense and related material, or other sectors; and Russian persons who support governments subject to U.S. sanctions or who disrupt energy supplies to Europe or Asia.

Other Russia-related sanctions authorities exist under CRIIEA; the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-95; 22 U.S.C. 8901 et seq.); and the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-272; 22 U.S.C. 8921 et seq.). For more, see CRS Report R45415, *U.S. Sanctions on Russia*, and CRS In Focus IF10962, *Russia, the Skripal Poisoning, and U.S. Sanctions*.

---

**Dianne E. Rennack**, Specialist in Foreign Policy Legislation

**Corey Welt**, Specialist in Russian and European Affairs

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.