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Obama Opposes Senate's Magnitsky Blacklist

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A senior U.S. State Department official has reiterated the Obama administration's opposition to a Senate bill that seeks wide-ranging sanctions against Russian officials implicated in the death of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.

The Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2011, introduced by Senator Ben Cardin in May, would freeze the U.S.-assets of Russian officials suspected of gross human rights violations and bar them from entering the country.

But in an interview with Ekho Moskvy radio, Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner said human rights violators can already be denied U.S. visas under long-standing rules that apply to all nationalities.

In July, the U.S. State Department adopted visa restrictions for an unspecified number of Russian linked to Magnitsky's death. The agency refused to publish their names, specifying only that their number totaled less than 60.

Magnitsky was denied medical care and died in pretrial detention in 2009 after accusing Interior Ministry officials of carrying out a $230 million tax fraud against Hermitage Capital.

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