

Clinton Confirms Chance of Trade Deal This Month

By [The Moscow Times](#)

September 09, 2012



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton talking with Sberbank reps on Saturday at the APEC forum in Vladivostok. **Sergei Karpukhin**

VLADIVOSTOK — The U.S. Congress may upgrade trade relations with Russia this month, a key part of the Obama administration's effort to bolster ties with Moscow and open the Russian market to more U.S. companies, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Saturday.

Clinton, addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Vladivostok, said the Obama administration was working closely with Congress on lifting the 1974 Jackson-Vanik amendment, Cold War-era legislation that has blocked normal trade privileges for Russia.

"To make sure our companies get to compete here in Russia, we are working closely with the United States Congress to terminate the application of Jackson-Vanik to Russia and grant Russia permanent normalized trade relations," Clinton said. "We hope that the Congress will

act on this important piece of legislation this month."

Congress is under pressure to approve the trade bill because of Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization last month, a move the United States strongly supported.

U.S. business groups hope the House of Representatives and Senate will pass the legislation in September, before lawmakers return home to campaign. Businesses worry that without it U.S. firms may not get access to newly opened services markets and be subject to potential arbitrary Russian trade reprisals.

But with concerns in Congress about Moscow's support for Iran and Syria, as well as its broader human rights record, the timing of a vote remains unclear.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment tied normal tariff treatment for goods from the former Soviet Union to the rights of Jews to emigrate.

Russia has been deemed in compliance for nearly two decades, but the law nevertheless remains on the books despite WTO rules that require members to provide normal trade relations to one another on an unconditional basis.

Congress may add conditions to any PNTR legislation, including a measure known as the "Magnitsky bill" to punish Russian officials for alleged human rights violations.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, who has called Russia the "No. 1 geopolitical foe" of the United States, has said he would support PNTR for Russia only if it is accompanied by a measure to target Russian human rights violations.

U.S. officials said Clinton raised the broad question of human rights in her talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Clinton is standing in at the Vladivostok summit for President Barack Obama, who is preparing for the November presidential election. She met Lavrov on Saturday and was due to see President Vladimir Putin.

U.S. officials say Clinton's trip is partially aimed at assessing Russia's push to expand engagement in Asia, which parallels the Obama administration's "pivot" to the Asia-Pacific region following years of entanglement in military campaigns in Iraq and [Afghanistan](#).

Clinton intended to stress to Putin that the United States welcomed a bigger Russian role in the region and was seeking to build more cooperation, the officials also said.

Clinton and Lavrov signed deals pledging to work together both in the Antarctic and in the fragile region of the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska.

Related articles:

- [Putin Urges Fair Trade](#)
- [Kremlin Optimistic About U.S. Trade Bill](#)
- [U.S. Group Expects Trade Bill Passage Sept. 12](#)

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/09/09/clinton-confirms-chance-of-trade-deal-this-month-a17629>