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McCain Wants Tougher U.S. Stance Against Russia

By The Moscow Times

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U.S. Senator John McCain has appealed to the White House to toughen its policy toward Russia and asked for the list of former Russian officials banned from entry to the United States to be extended.

In an interview for CNN McCain said it was time to get tough with Russia and seemingly took a shot at President Vladimir Putin, saying that the U.S. should denounce "the activity of that autocrat, the KGB colonel, who continues to oppress the people of Russia."

The Senator said during the interview that extending the "Magnitsky list" should be one of the main steps toward "tougher relations" with Russia. The list shares the name of late lawyer Sergei Magnitsky who died in pretrial detention in 2009. He had been arrested on tax evasion charges after uncovering the embezzlement of $230 million of state funds by government officials.

In April, the U.S. published a list of 18 Russians suspected of human rights violations and being involved in Magnitsky's death. Those named on the list are banned from entry to the United States and their U.S. assets are also frozen.

Earlier, former U.S. State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said the possibility of adding more Russian officials to the list was being looked into following a Moscow court's July 11 decision to find Magnitsky and his former chief William Browder guilty of tax evasion.

Russia's Foreign Affairs Ministry said earlier that all initiatives to put pressure on Russia by blacklisting its officials will be met with a hard response.

The ministry's spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said Friday that the war of blacklists initiated by Washington was a dead end that reduces U.S.-Russian relations to a fruitless standoff. Lukashevich appealed to the U.S. administration's wisdom and asked it not to take steps that can harm bilateral relations, RBC Daily reported.

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