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U.S. Will Not Extend 'Magnitsky List', Report Says

By The Moscow Times

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The Obama administration has refused to expand the so-called "Magnitsky" blacklist of accused Russian rights abusers in time for the release of its inaugural annual report on the sanctions, a U.S. website reported.

The U.S. State Department had been preparing to add up to 20 new names to the "Magnitsky List" but opted at the last second not to expand the blacklist with the release of the report looming, U.S. officials, Congressional sources and experts said, news website The Daily Beast reported.

"We had multiple high-level assurances that there had been new names," a Congressional aide told The Daily Beast.

"Now we hear today that there's not going to be a new list. There's no explanation."

The blacklist was authorized under the Magnitsky Act, a U.S. law designed to punish officials believed to be connected to the death of whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky in a Moscow jail in 2009. The legislation was later broadened to include a range of reported Russian rights abusers.

The law, which was enacted by U.S. President Barack Obama on Dec. 14, 2012, is seen as a central factor in the deterioration of ties between the United States and Russia over the past 18 months.

Moscow has repeatedly portrayed the law as U.S. interference with its internal affairs and has responded in part by banning Americans from adopting Russian children.

The U.S. administration was expected to submit to Congress an annual report on possible additions to the blacklist by Dec. 14, but had not done so as of late Thursday.

Michael McFaul, the U.S. ambassador to Russia, said last week that additions to the Magnitsky list could be announced by the end of the year.

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Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said in reply that Moscow would reciprocate with a measured and proportional response should Washington decide to expand the blacklist.

White House National Security Council spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden told The Daily Beast on Thursday that even if the report submitted to Congress does not include new names, more Russian officials could be targeted with sanctions in the future.

"While I can't speak to the timing of any additional designations — which are not required to occur at the same time as the annual report — a number of cases are under review, and the administration is determined to fully implement the act by making further designations as appropriate," Hayden said.

Whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky was a lawyer for U.S.-born British investor William Browder. He alleged in 2008 that organized criminals colluded with corrupt Russian Interior Ministry officials to claim a fraudulent $230 million tax rebate after illegally seizing subsidiaries of Browder's Hermitage Capital investment company.

Material from The Moscow Times has been included in this report.

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