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Russia Not Planning Sanctions Against Western Officials, Rogozin Says

By Natalya Krainova

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A file photo of Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin (center) at a conference in June 2013.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin denied Tuesday that Russia was contemplating sanctions against U.S. and European officials to retaliate for banking and travel restrictions imposed on officials involved in staging Sunday's referendum in Crimea, in which voters overwhelmingly voted for joining Russia.

The Foreign Ministry, however, said in a statement that Russia would retaliate in response to the sanctions, which targeted more than a dozen Russian and Ukrainian officials.

Rogozin told journalists that the Russian government was not considering imposing sanctions against the U.S. and the European Union because it does not view the asset freezes and travel bans seriously.

Rogozin said the "search for accounts and property of people who cannot have them

by definition is some angry joke," he said, referring to the ban on Russian state officials holding assets abroad, Interfax reported.

Rogozin's comments appeared to contradict a report on U.S. news website The Daily Beast, which on Tuesday cited diplomatic sources who said Russia was drafting a list of U.S. congressmen and top officials from the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama to sanction in response to the U.S. sanctions.

Russia's Foreign Ministry warned of an "appropriate response" to the sanctions Tuesday but did not specify what form that response could that.

"Attempts to talk to Russia in the language of force, to threaten Russian citizens with sanctions, lead nowhere," the Foreign Ministry said.

"The adoption of restrictive measures is not our choice, although, clearly, we will not leave sanctions imposed on us without an appropriate response from the Russian side," the ministry said.

The Daily Beast said the Russian list of U.S. nationals to be hit by sanctions would include Senators Dick Durbin, John McCain, Robert Menendez and Bob Corker, as well as Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Victoria Nuland.

In a statement adopted by State Duma lawmakers on Tuesday as an official response to the Western sanctions, no mention was made of sanctions against U.S. and European officials.

Lawmakers confined themselves to expressing "surprise" at the U.S. and Europe's failure to "accept the will of the people" of Crimea despite preaching the right of people to self-determination.

Several Russians targeted said they considered the sanctions a badge of honor.

"This does not bother me — on the contrary, I am proud," said Vladislav Surkov, a close aide once known as Putin's 'grey cardinal' for his behind-the-scenes influence, according to Interfax.

"I consider this a kind of political Oscar from the U.S. for best male supporting role."

Sergei Zheleznyak, a pro-Kremlin deputy speaker of the State Duma, Russia's lower parliament house, said the U.S. and EU were acting like "capricious kindergarten children," Interfax reported.

Material from Reuters is included in this report.

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