

Russia Retaliates Against Canadian Sanctions

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Russia's Foreign Ministry said Monday that it was barring 13 Canadian officials and public figures from entry to the country in response to sanctions earlier imposed by Canada in the wake of Crimea's reunification with Russia.

The list includes several aides to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the head of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Paul Grod.

"This step comes in response to unacceptable actions by the Canadian side that have seriously hurt bilateral relations," the ministry said in a statement.

Canada joined the U.S. and EU in announcing sanctions last week in response to Crimea rejoining Russia, naming seven Russian and three Crimean officials subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

The region became part of Russia last week following a referendum that saw over 96 percent of voters support the measure.

"We regret that Ottawa has chosen to ignore the free expression of the Crimean citizens, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the reunification with Russia in accordance with international law and the UN Charter," the ministry said in a statement criticizing Canada for supporting the government in Kiev, which it calls illegitimate.

Canada's sanctions targeted top officials, including Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin and Crimea's pro-Moscow leader Sergei Aksyonov.

Canada also suspended military cooperation with Russia earlier and halted participation in an intergovernmental economic commission in reaction to the situation in Ukraine.

The EU expanded the number of Russian and Ukrainian officials under sanctions to 33 on Friday, a day after the U.S. added 20 more officials to its own list.

Russia on Thursday retaliated by imposing sanctions against nine senior US officials.

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