

Obama Expected to Call EU Leaders Over Russia Sanctions

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Barack Obama will try to nudge the EU toward fresh sanctions against Russia over Ukraine.

U.S. President Barack Obama is expected to speak to several European leaders on Friday to try to nudge the EU toward fresh sanctions against Russia over Ukraine, sources familiar with the matter said.

Disagreements among European Union nations on whether to impose new economic sanctions on Russia have held up punitive steps by the U.S. but Washington could also act on its own, said the sources on condition of anonymity.

U.S. officials have grown increasingly impatient with what they describe as Russia's failure to live up to its commitments in an April 17 agreement reached in Geneva to try to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine.

The U.S. is also frustrated at the reluctance of some European nations, notably Germany and Italy, to impose a new round of economic sanctions on Russia but it would much prefer to act in concert with the EU rather than on its own.

The sources said Obama was expected to speak in a conference call on Friday with British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi to discuss the issue.

Comment from the White House was not immediately available.

The U.S. has so far imposed three rounds of sanctions in connection with the unrest in Ukraine — two aimed at Russian targets and a third focused on Crimean individuals and a Crimean gas company.

The EU is highly dependent on Russian gas deliveries, and the crisis over Ukraine has fanned concerns about future supply. Russia is also an important market for many EU exporters, notably in Germany.

On March 21, the EU imposed sanctions on 12 Russians and Ukrainians because of Moscow's takeover of Crimea, bringing the number of people targeted by EU asset freezes and travel bans to 33.

On April 14, the EU agreed to expand the list of people subject to such penalties but the bloc has yet to agree on the names or to actually impose the sanctions.

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