The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. Trying to Force Regime Change in Russia With Sanctions, Official Says

December 08, 2014



U.S. President Barack Obama is seen on monitors as he speaks, inside the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington.

A senior Russian diplomat accused the United States on Monday of trying to bring down President Vladimir Putin with the sanctions it has imposed on Moscow over the crisis in Ukraine.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told parliamentary deputies that ties between Moscow and Washington were in a very deep chill and were likely to remain so if the sanctions remained for a long time.

"It is hardly a secret that the goal of the sanctions is to create social and economic conditions to carry out a change of power in Russia," Ryabkov told a hearing in the lower house. "There will be no easy or fast way out of this."

He said he did not expect the United States to recognize Crimea as part of Russia "for decades to come" and accused Washington of trying to drive a wedge between Russia and the other

former Soviet republics.

Ties between Russia and the United States took a dive this year as the Cold War-era foes traded accusations over the crisis in Ukraine, and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has accused Washington of seeking "regime change."

President Vladimir Putin has portrayed Western sanctions as an attempt to contain Russia and punish it for becoming strong and independent.

State media have often repeated this message and an opinion poll released by the independent Levada research group on Monday showed 74 percent of Russians have negative views of the United States, compared to 18 percent who think the opposite.

Levada said the figures marked the lowest point in Russians' attitudes toward the United States since 1990, the year before the Soviet Union collapsed.

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