The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Obama Extends Sanctions Against Russia, Citing Threat to 'National Security'

March 04, 2015



U.S. President Barack Obama speaks in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on Mar. 3, 2015.

U.S. President Barack Obama has issued an order to extend by one year a series of sanctions against Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis, the White House said Tuesday.

In a statement published on the White House website, Obama said he was extending U.S. sanctions imposed on Russia last March and December in light of the continuing "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

The U.S. first imposed sanctions on Russia on March 6, 2014, when Obama signed an executive order imposing travel bans and asset freezes against individuals that had "asserted governmental authority" in the Crimea peninsula without consent from the Ukrainian authorities.

Later that month, Obama signed two executive orders that expanded the scope of the sanctions, stating that the "actions and policies of the government of the Russian Federation" had undermined Ukraine's territorial sovereignty.

Russia in March last year annexed Crimea following the outcome of a referendum that was denounced by the West as illegitimate and unconstitutional.

Additional sanctions imposed in December also prohibited new U.S. investment in Crimea and restricted the country's trade with the region.

Tuesday's statement said the extension order would be transmitted to the U.S. Congress.

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