The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Senators Won't to Go to U.S. Over Visa Scandal

August 27, 2015



Federation Council head Valentina Matviyenko

After the U.S. State Department issued a restricted entry visa to Federation Council Speaker Valentina Matviyenko — featured on the list of those sanctioned by the U.S. over Ukraine — a whole delegation of Russian senators refused to go to New York, Interfax reported on Wednesday.

Matviyenko was one of the first Russian officials put under U.S. sanctions that included an assets freeze and a travel ban. Matviyenko was sanctioned "for her status as head of the Federation Council," the White House said in its statement at the time.

This week, the State Department issued Matviyenko a visa that would only allow her to attend the United Nations-related events in New York, while she was also scheduled to participate in a Inter-Parliamentary Union Summit scheduled to take place at the UN headquarters building. The visa issued by the State Department would not have allowed her to attend the summit.

After receiving the visa, Matviyenko and a group of other senators decided to cancel their trip.

“These actions by Washington, which claims the role of the main defender of democracy and the freedom of speech in the world, in essence make it impossible to voice any views that differ from the U.S. political platform and priorities,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In her own statement, Matviyenko called sanctions against elected lawmakers “medieval.”

“It is a matter of public record that Matviyenko has been sanctioned by several countries due to her actions related to Ukraine, and she and other Russian officials are aware that she is subject to sanctions,” said John Kirby, the State Department's spokesperson at a daily briefing on Wednesday.

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