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U.S. Orders Sputnik News Agency to Register as 'Foreign Agent'

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The U.S. Justice Department / Wikicommons

The United States has ordered the Russian government-funded Sputnik news agency to register as a "foreign agent," the latest episode in a media war that has unfolded between the two countries in the past year.

U.S. intelligence agencies have accused Russian media organizations of participating in a propaganda campaign to influence the 2016 presidential election. The Kremlin-funded RT news network was forced to register as a foreign agent in November 2017 over the claims.

Related article: What You Need to Know About RT's Pending Foreign Agent Registration

The U.S. Justice Department has now instructed RIA Global LLC, the media company affiliated with Sputnik, to register under the same 1938 anti-Nazi propaganda law as RT, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported Wednesday.

"RIA Global's obligation to register arises from its political activities in the United States," RIA Novosti cites a Justice Department letter as saying.

RIA Novosti and Sputnik both operate under the "Rossiya Segodnya" company name after a 2013-2014 restructuring that was widely seen as a Kremlin attempt to tighten its grip on the media.

Russia immediately retaliated to RT's foreign agent registration with a "foreign agent" law of its own, slapping at least nine U.S. government-sponsored media outlets with a label that recalls Cold War era intrigues.

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