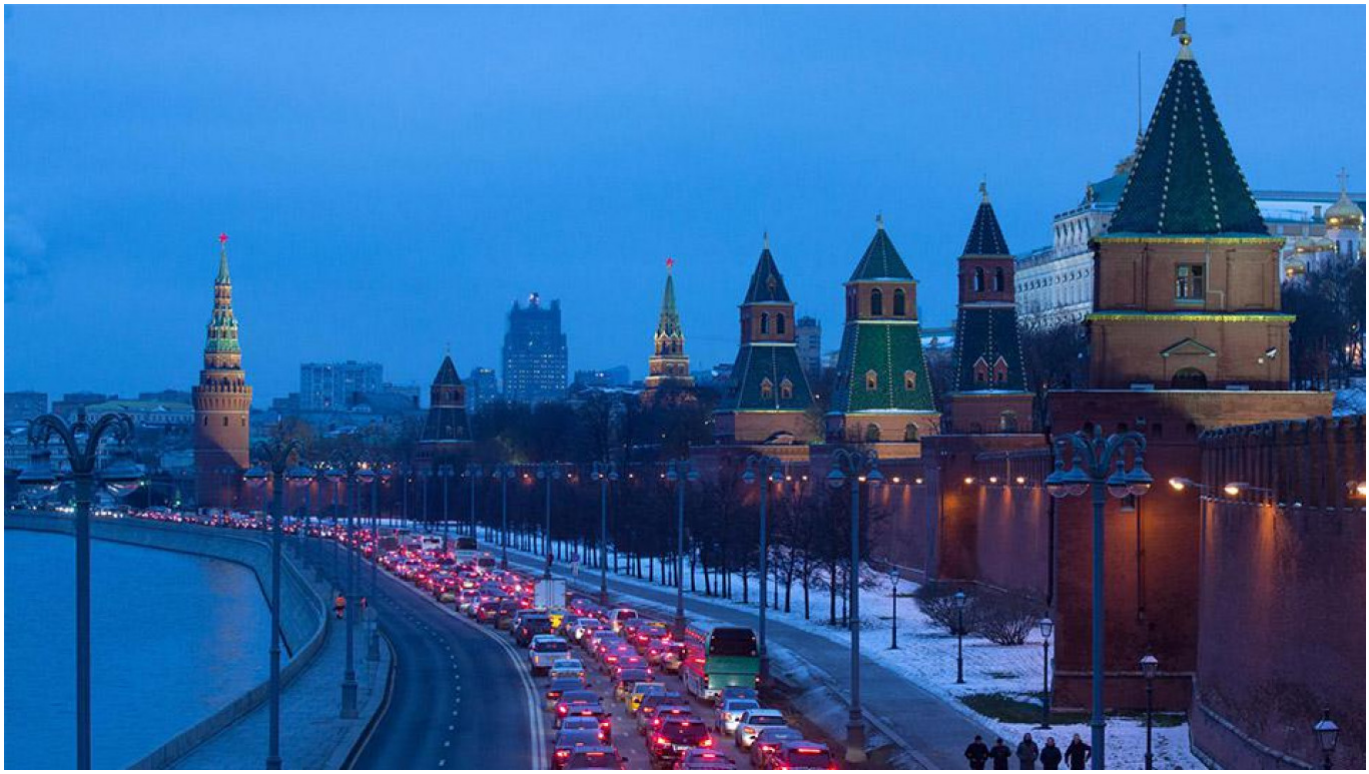
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U.S. Releases Sweeping List of Russian Billionaires, Officials

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Bloomberg

(Bloomberg) — The U.S. identified some of Russia's richest tycoons and allies of President Vladimir Putin for potential sanctions, ratcheting up pressure over alleged Kremlin interference in the 2016 presidential vote.

The Treasury released a list of 210 names viewed as close to Putin's government. While they won't automatically face any punitive measures such as a U.S. asset freeze and visa ban, their inclusion may dissuade banks and other institutions in the U.S. and Europe from doing business with them.

Russians with a net worth of more than $1 billion were included in the list of 96 oligarchs, according to the document. 114 others, including senior Kremlin and government officials, as well as CEOs of state companies, were also named.

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The list, mandated by Congress in retaliation for election meddling in a law passed last summer over White House objections, has sparked anxiety among Russia's business elite and incensed the Kremlin. It's likely to fuel tensions between the former Cold War rivals, which have steadily worsened since President Donald Trump came to power last year.

The law tasked the Treasury, State Department and Director of National Intelligence with producing a report listing "the most senior foreign political figures and oligarchs in the Russian Federation, as determined by their closeness to the Russian regime and their net worth."

The Kremlin last month warned that additional sanctions could lead to "unbearable risks and dangers" for relations with the U.S., which it said were already in a "pitiful state."

Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, accused the Trump administration of using the measure to try and influence the March 18 presidential election, in which the Russian leader is seeking to extend his almost two-decade-long rule.

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Russia's hopes of a thaw in ties with the U.S. promised by Trump in the run-up to his election have evaporated amid a cross-party drive in Washington to punish Russia for its alleged efforts to sway the vote in the Republican leader's favor.

Past sanctions have targeted officials and Kremlin insiders as well as restricted Russia's access to international financing and energy technology, ensnaring more than 200 individuals and 400 companies. But the latest move marks a serious threat to the wider Russian business community

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