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Trump Official Slams New Anti-Russia Sanctions in Leaked Letter

The letter says the proposed measures against Russia are "counter-productive" and "unnecessary."

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Mike Pompeo **Gage Skidmore / Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0)**

Donald Trump's administration has slammed a new package of tough anti-Russia sanctions advanced by U.S. lawmakers earlier this week, The Daily Beast reported Thursday, citing a leaked letter from a State Department official.

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved draft legislation Wednesday that would impose new sanctions against Russia's banking, energy and ship-building sectors and restrict Russia's ability to raise sovereign debt. Dubbed the "sanctions bill from hell" by one of the senators who introduced it, the package would ramp up pressure on Russia in response to its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections.

Related article: U.S. Senate Panel Advances Russia Sanctions Bill 'From Hell'

In a 22-page letter to the Foreign Relations Committee obtained by The Daily Beast, a Trump State Department official said the administration "strongly opposes" the new sanctions and calls them "unnecessary," "unproductive," and a threat to U.S. relations with its European allies.

"This bill will harm global markets, the U.S., European and other key economies without sufficient benefits to warrant such side effects," the letter stated.

The letter added that the bill's clause on permanent non-recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea violates the U.S. constitution, which grants the right exclusively to the president.

It also said that the bill's provision for the president to publicly confirm if Russia was interfering with U.S. elections every 90 days was "designed for failure," stating it would be "impossible" to prove the absence of Kremlin interference.

The bill — officially named "Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression" (DASKA) — was first introduced in 2018 by senior senators, including Republicans John McCain and Lindsay Graham, and the Foreign Relations Committee's top Democrat Bob Menendez.

After being approved by the committee in a 17-5 vote earlier this week, the proposal will now move to a vote in the senate, though it is unclear whether this will happen before the U.S. presidential elections next November.

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