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U.S. Sanctions Russian Tycoon's Central Africa Business

By AFP

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Mikhail Metzel / TASS

The U.S. Treasury on Wednesday sanctioned associates and businesses connected with a wealthy financier close to Russian President Vladimir Putin as well as Moscow's security service.

Eight people and seven entities related to Yevgeniy Prigozhin and the Federal Security Service (FSB) were targeted in the sanctions, which Treasury said in a statement were aimed at checking both Prigozhin's activities in the Central African Republic and the FSB, which has been accused of interfering in the US elections.

Prigozhin has been a particular target of Washington, which sanctioned him in 2018 and 2019 on claims he supported the Wagner Group mercenary outfit, which has been accused of intervening in Libya's civil war and supporting Sudan's ousted dictator.

Prigozhin is also alleged to fund the Internet Research Agency, a mysterious "troll farm" in St. Petersburg said to run online manipulation to back then-candidate Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. election.

"Yevgeniy Prigozhin has an international network of supporters to spread his malign political and economic influence around the globe," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement.

"The United States will continue to target the ability of Prigozhin to conduct operations globally."

The latest sanctions target two mining businesses and three employees tied to Prigozhin in the Central African Republic, which has struggled with instability and armed conflict since President Francois Bozize was ousted in a coup in 2012.

Washington has also sanctioned the FSB, and on Wednesday it designated a Russian underwater technology company along with three of its employees for cooperating with the security service.

Also targeted were a Finland-based freight forwarding company and its owner along with three other businesses for aiding the FSB in evading U.S. sanctions.

US sought "accountability for the Russian government's use of proxy actors and intelligence organizations, including the FSB, for perpetrating an array of destabilizing activities, such as conducting malicious cyber activities and interfering in elections," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

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