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U.S. Waives Sanctions on Nord Stream 2, Builder of Russia-Germany Pipeline

By AFP

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Once complete, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is expected to transport natural gas from Russia to Western Europe. **Jens Büttner / dpa / TASS**

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday waived sanctions against Nord Stream 2, the Russian-controlled builder of a Russia-Germany gas pipeline, which Washington has called a geopolitical security risk.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a letter to Congress that waiving the original sanctions mandated by Congress for Swiss-based Nord Stream 2 AG, and its chief executive Matthias Warnig, "is in the national interests of the United States."

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The move defused rising tensions between Washington and Berlin over the project, which

Germany and other European countries see as crucial to securing long-term energy supplies to the region.

Germany had rejected the looming imposition of sanctions as interference in its domestic affairs.

Earlier Wednesday, Germany's foreign minister Heiko Maas welcomed the expected move as a conciliatory step.

"We understand the decisions that have been taken in Washington as taking into account the really extraordinarily good relationship that have been built with the Biden administration," Maas said.

The State Department did approve sanctions on several vessels and smaller companies and organizations involved in building and administering the pipeline.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also welcomed the expected move, saying: "It's better than reading announcements of new sanctions, it would certainly be positive."

But the move was strongly criticized by Republican Senator Jim Risch, who called the waiver "a gift to (Vladimir) Putin that will only weaken the United States' leverage in the lead up to the impending Biden-Putin summit."

"The administration is prioritizing perceived German and Russian interests over those of our allies in Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe," Risch said in a statement.

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