

Russia Makes Covering Military Corruption News Grounds for 'Foreign Agent' Status

October 01, 2021



Journalists protested in single pickets outside the FSB building in Moscow. **Vladislav Shatilo / RBC / TASS**

News organizations in Russia risk being labeled “foreign agents” for covering corruption, crime and other issues within the military and space industries, under [new rules](#) that will likely further strain the country’s media landscape.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) published a 60-point list of information Tuesday that is not classified as a state secret, but which “foreign states, organizations and citizens can use against Russia’s security.”

According to the list, covering military crimes, troop morale, or the size, weapons, deployments, training and structure of the Russian armed forces and other security bodies are all grounds for a news outlet to be labeled a “foreign agent.”

News outlets also risk being tagged “foreign agent” for covering military tenders and problems that “hinder the development” of the notoriously [corruption-prone](#) state space agency Roscosmos.

Related article: [Russia Labels More Independent Media Outlets, Activists ‘Foreign Agents’](#)

The FSB published the “foreign agent” information list in the same week that Russia nearly [doubled](#) its list of “foreign agent” media and journalists. Critics have slammed the recent designations, which pose existential threats to the news organizations’ business models, as part of a widening crackdown on independent voices.

“Foreign agents” are required by law to submit regular financial reports and include boilerplate text stating their designation on everything they publish, including social media posts. Media outlets say the label alienates them from advertisers, sources and partners.

Russia’s Justice Ministry told activists in August that the government enjoys [broad authority](#) in determining grounds for labeling an outlet, NGO or individual a “foreign agent.” Gifts from relatives and participation in international conferences, for example, are grounds for being labeled a “foreign agent.”

The Kremlin has maintained that it adopted the “foreign agent” law in retaliation to the state-funded RT and Sputnik news organizations being forced to register as such in the United States.

The Kremlin has rejected recent calls to abolish its “foreign agent” law, while senior Russian lawmakers [promised](#) to look into claims that the legislation is too vague this fall.

Original url:

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