The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Blinken Denounces ‘Covert’ Activities by Russia’s RT Media

By AFP

September 14, 2024



Jim Watson/AFP

Top U.S. diplomat Antony Blinken on Friday accused Russian media outlet RT of being a "de facto arm of Russia's intelligence apparatus" being used against countries around the world.

"We know that RT possesses cyber capabilities and engaged in covert information influence operations and military procurement," the secretary of state told reporters.

"Russian weaponization of disinformation to subvert and polarize free and open societies extends to every part of the world," Blinken said.

"We urge every ally, every partner, to start by treating RT's activities as they do other intelligence activities by Russia within their borders," he added, welcoming such an initiative being undertaken jointly by the U.S., Britain and Canada.

Earlier this month, U.S. authorities announced a battery of measures including sanctions and

potential prosecution targeting Russian media over alleged attempts to interfere in this year's American elections.

The State Department at that time imposed visa restrictions affecting media group Rossiya Segodnya, which includes RT, as well as others of its affiliates.

Moscow responded sarcastically to Blinken's latest remarks, with foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova saying on Telegram: "There should be a new profession in the United States -- a specialist in sanctions against Russia."

RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan said she was waiting "with popcorn" ahead of Blinken's statement to reporters.

"The State Department will declare us the world's best spies. Be ready," she posted on Telegram.

RT, a news organ launched in 2005, is widely considered abroad to be a vehicle for Kremlin propaganda.

On Friday, the State Department emphasized that the group's efforts at destabilization extend far beyond the United States, singling out actions affecting Moldova, Argentina, France, Germany and parts of Africa.

It said the Russian government this spring "embedded within RT an entity with cyber operational capabilities and ties to Russian intelligence."

It added: "This cyber entity has focused primarily on influence and intelligence operations all over the world."

One RT project was a vast online crowd-funding program designed to help provide military equipment for Russian units in Ukraine.

Blinken said the program had procured sniper rifles, body armor, night-vision goggles, drones and radio equipment for the Russian invaders.

Jamie Rubin, who heads a State Department unit meant to counter propaganda and disinformation, said RT was "not just a fire hose, as the Secretary put it, of disinformation, but a fully fledged member of the intelligence apparatus and operation of the Russian government on the war in Ukraine."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/09/14/blinken-denounces-covert-activities-by-russias-rt-media-a86372