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U.S. Disbands Task Forces on Russian Sanctions, Foreign Influence

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Taidgh Barron / ZUMA Press Wire / TASS

The U.S. Justice Department disbanded two key task forces focused on enforcing sanctions against Russian oligarchs and investigating foreign influence, Reuters reported Thursday, citing a memo that newly appointed Attorney General Pam Bondi sent to staff.

The memo, issued on Wednesday, said the department would shut down Task Force KleptoCapture, which was created under the Biden administration in response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Bondi also ordered the closure of the Foreign Influence Task Force, which investigated violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).

"This policy requires a fundamental change in mindset and approach," Bondi wrote in the memo, adding that resources would now be redirected toward fighting drug cartels.

Task Force KleptoCapture was responsible for seizing assets of Kremlin-linked oligarchs and prosecuting individuals accused of helping them evade sanctions. The unit brought criminal charges against several high-profile figures, including aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska

and media tycoon Konstantin Malofeyev.

Andrew Adams, the task force's first leader, told Reuters that while the move was unlikely to trigger a surge of Russian money into the U.S., it would lead to "a sharp decline in the pace of charges that target facilitators that are specific to Russia."

Since taking office in January, U.S. President Donald Trump has made combating the illicit flow of fentanyl into the U.S. a top priority for his administration. The White House designated several drug cartels as terrorist organizations last month.

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