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U.K. Sanctions Russian 'Disinformation' Outfit Over Plot to Sway Armenian Elections

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Sergei Bobylev / TASS

The British government on Monday sanctioned 85 individuals and entities accused of meddling in Armenia's upcoming elections and orchestrating the forced deportation and indoctrination of Ukrainian children.

The new measures target 49 employees of the Social Design Agency (SDA), a group already under Western sanctions for alleged election interference. British officials described the sanctioned staff, including writers, translators and video producers, as part of a Kremlin-funded operation designed to mimic Western news outlets to spread disinformation.

"The SDA has been tasked and funded by the Kremlin to deliver a series of interference operations designed to undermine democracy and weaken support for Ukraine," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

London accused the SDA of attempting to install pro-Moscow figures in Armenia ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for June 7. Tensions between the two nations have spiked recently following Armenia's moves toward EU membership and a visit to Yerevan last week by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The sanctions also hit ANO Dialog and its leadership. British authorities allege the group has coordinated with Russian intelligence to influence Armenia's domestic politics.

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A second part of the latest sanctions package focuses on the so-called "Russification" of Ukrainian children. Among those targeted are the leaders of Yunarmiya (Youth Army) and Movement of the First, government-backed organizations that combine military training with ideological indoctrination.

The list also includes several children's boarding houses in annexed Crimea, which the U.K. claims are involved in the forced relocation of minors.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the United Kingdom has sanctioned more than 3,300 individuals, entities and ships linked to the Russian state.

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