

Russia Responds: Putin Signs ‘Foreign Agents’ Media Bill into Law

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Nearly two weeks after the Duma, the lower house of Russia’s parliament, [approved legislation allowing authorities to designate US-backed media organizations](#) as foreign agents, Russian President Vladimir Putin has officially signed the bill into law.

The law allows Moscow to label foreign media outlets as “foreign agents” in response to Washington’s decision to force Russia Today, a media organization funded by the Russian government that has been operating in the US since 2005, to register as a foreign agent.

As Reuters points out, the new law has been rushed through both Russian houses of parliament in the last two weeks. It will now allow Moscow to force foreign media to brand news they provide to Russians as the work of “foreign agents” and to disclose their funding sources.

The US intelligence community has accused the Kremlin of using Russian media organizations it finances to influence US voters, and Washington has since required Russian state broadcaster RT to register a U.S.-based affiliate company as a “foreign agent.”

Last week, the Russian judiciary published a list of nine US-funded media organizations that would be added to the list. The outlets are the US-government-sponsored Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE), otherwise known as Radio Liberty, radio channels, along with seven separate Russian or local-language news outlets run by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

One of the seven outlets provide news on Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, one on Siberia, and one on the predominantly Muslim North Caucasus region. Another covers provincial Russia, one is an online TV station, another covers the mostly Muslim region of Tatarstan, and the other is a news portal that fact-checks the statements of Russian officials.

According to a copy of the bill found in a Russian government database, the law takes effect immediately.

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