

US Senate “Sanctions Bill From Hell” Targeting Russia and Putin

Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, teamed up with Foreign Relations ranking Democrat Robert Menendez of New Jersey in leading the latest legislative push

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Global Research, August 04, 2018

[Roll Call](#) 2 August 2018

Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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*A bipartisan Senate contingent has introduced what Republican [Lindsey Graham](#) has called the “sanctions bill from hell,” targeting Russia and **President Vladimir Putin**.*

The legislation, which was introduced just as senators were departing for a shortened August recess on Wednesday, targets Russian oligarchs and Putin family members for additional sanctions, and it would seek to require a two-thirds vote of the Senate for any attempt by the U.S. to abandon NATO.

“We must confront this challenge — not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans. Because ultimately, Putin’s true aim is to undermine all of us — our country, our freedom, and all that America stands for,” said Armed Services Chairman [John McCain](#) of Arizona, who has joined in the Graham-led legislation.

Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, teamed up with Foreign Relations ranking Democrat [Robert Menendez](#) of New Jersey in leading the latest legislative push.

Menendez noted in his statement that **President Donald Trump** and his administration has not used all of the tools at its disposal to counter Russian efforts to interfere in American democracy.

“The Kremlin continues to attack our democracy, support a war criminal in Syria and violate Ukraine’s sovereignty,” Menendez said. “With the passage of this legislation, Congress will once again act to establish a clear U.S. policy to hold Russia accountable with one clear message: Kremlin aggression will be met with consequences that will shake Putin’s regime to its foundation.”

The introduction of the bill, which was [previewed last week](#), comes after disclosures by Facebook that the social media company, which also owns Instagram, had removed numerous pages of memes and events that were fraudulent in nature. The phony accounts are [widely believed](#) to be connected to Russian intelligence.

The Senate Intelligence Committee held a hearing on Wednesday with outside experts on the covert use of social media platforms by the Russians, highlighting the ongoing concern about efforts to increase divisions in the U.S., both between and within political parties.

Republican **Sen. Cory Gardner** of Colorado also signed on to the bill. He has been pushing a separate effort to require the State Department to determine whether Russia should be designated a state sponsor of terror. That provision has now been included in the Graham-Menendez legislation.

“Unless Russia fundamentally changes its behavior, we must not repeat the mistakes of past administrations of trying to normalize relations with a nation that continues to pose a serious threat to the United States and our allies,” Gardner said in a statement.

Despite the level of fervor among senators about Russia’s use of active measures and the introduction of [several pieces of legislation](#) (also including a proposal from Democratic **Sen. Chris Van Hollen** of Maryland and Republican **Sen. Marco Rubio** of Florida that’s supposed to provide for deterrence and retaliation), the Senate left for recess without passing any specific bills on the subject.

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