

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Treasury Targets the Kremlin's Continued Malign Political Influence Operations in the U.S. and Globally

July 29, 2022

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), as part of a [joint action with the Department of Justice](#), sanctioned two individuals and four entities that support the Kremlin's global malign influence operations and election interference activities. The individuals and entities designated today played various roles in Russia's attempts to manipulate and destabilize the United States and its allies and partners, including Ukraine. This action follows a series of OFAC designations that have highlighted and disrupted Russia's persistent election [interference operations](#) and [destabilization efforts](#) against Ukraine.

Today's actions demonstrate the U.S. government's resolve to protect free and fair elections, as well as other democratic institutions and processes. This action is separate and distinct from the broad range of high impact measures the United States and its allies and partners continue to impose on Russia for its war against Ukraine, which is another clear example of the Kremlin's disregard for the sovereignty - and independence - of other states.

"Free and fair elections form a pillar of American democracy that must be protected from outside influence," said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. "The Kremlin has repeatedly sought to threaten and undermine our democratic processes and institutions. The United States will continue our extensive work to counter these efforts and safeguard our democracy from Russia's interference."

Russian intelligence services, including the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), support Kremlin-directed influence operations against the United States and its allies and partners, and often recruit individuals, known as "co-optees. Russia's intelligence services then leverage these individuals to create or heighten divisions within the country. Russia's co-optees carry out specific assignments, inform Russia's intelligence services about specific people and events, and conduct specific assignments for them.

In addition to using co-optees to advance its malign influence operations, the Kremlin is known to use a collection of official, proxy, and unattributed digital channels and platforms,

such as outlets operated by Russian intelligence services and witting and unwitting propagators of the Kremlin's narratives, to create and amplify misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. One notable broad Kremlin interference effort is Yevgeniy Viktorovich Prigozhin's (Prigozhin) [Project Lakhta, which is a disinformation campaign and scheme funded by Prigozhin targeting audiences in the United States, Europe, Ukraine, and even Russia.](#)

Project Lakhta has expenses in the tens of millions of dollars, including an operating budget in the millions of dollars, which it uses to fund troll farms and other mechanisms of malign influence. Since at least 2014, Project Lakhta has used, among other things, fictitious online personas that posed as U.S. persons in an effort to interfere in U.S. elections. Prigozhin is the financier of the Internet Research Agency (IRA), the Project Lakhta-related troll farm in Russia that OFAC designated pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13848 in 2018 for interfering in the 2016 presidential election. Prigozhin himself has been designated pursuant to E.O. 13661, 13694, as amended, and 13848. In addition to today's sanctions designation, the U.S. is seeking, via the Department of State's [Reward for Justice program](#), any tips on his planned future election interference efforts.

FSB CO-OPTEE TARGETS U.S. ELECTIONS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL DIVISIONS

Since at least mid-2018, Russian Federation national **Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov** (Ionov) has been an FSB co-optee who uses his positions and various companies to promulgate the Kremlin's disinformation and malign influence agenda.

Since at least the summer 2020, Ionov cooperated and coordinated with the FSB to identify socio-political points of contention within the United States. He provided support, usually in the form of monetary donations, to organizations that he and Russia's intelligence services believed would create socio-political disturbances in the United States. In the summer of 2021, Ionov informed the FSB about a known U.S. person's political ambitions; the FSB subsequently expressed an interest in this person.

Ionov cooperates with Prigozhin's Project Lakhta entities to publish and disseminate disinformation. In the summer 2021, Ionov sought to collaborate with Prigozhin's Foundation for Battling Injustice (FBI) about the feasibility of directly supporting a specific candidate in a 2022 U.S. gubernatorial election. In mid-2021, Ionov worked to disseminate and promulgate disinformation that would influence the U.S. election process and exacerbate the socio-political division within the United States.

In addition to his disinformation activities at the direction of the FSB and in support of the Kremlin, in 2018, Ionov established a fundraising campaign through a website for Maria Butina (Butina), the Russia Federation national who plead guilty to felony charges of conspiracy to act as an unregistered foreign agent of the Russian state in December 2018. Ionov indicated in a March 2019 interview that the website, at the time, had raised about \$30,000 to help pay Butina's legal fees.

Ionov is the president and founder of the **Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia** (AGMR), whose English-language website claims to be a socio-political movement "against certain aspects of the globalization process" and seeks to stop "manifestations" of the so-called "new world order." AGMR has maintained connections with separatists and anti-establishment groups in the United States and abroad, holding conferences and protests in the United States in opposition to U.S. policy. AGMR has received funding from Russia's National Charity Fund, a trust created by Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin which gathers money from Russia's state-owned companies and oligarchs.

Ionov is also the president, founder, and 100% shareholder of **Ionov Transkontinental, OOO** (Ionov Transkontinental), which has a footprint in Iran, Venezuela, and Lebanon.

STOP-Imperialism is an English and Russian-language website that styles itself as a "global information agency." STOP-Imperialism's website does not provide any contact or "about us" information, a tactic often used to obfuscate ownership or association, yet Ionov is the registrant of STOP-Imperialism's domain. Additionally, STOP-Imperialism is identified on AGMR's website as an "information partner," which indicates that Ionov and AGMR use STOP-Imperialism as a means of further disseminating disinformation in fulfillment of the Kremlin's overall malign influence campaign.

Ionov was designated pursuant to E.O. 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation.

[In addition to being added to the SDN List, the Department of Justice unsealed an indictment charging Ionov for his foreign malign influence activities against the United States.](#)

AGMR and Ionov Transkontinental were designated pursuant to E.O. 14024 for being owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, Ionov, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024.

STOP-Imperialism was designated pursuant to E.O. 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, Ionov, a person whose property and interests in

property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024.

KREMLIN GONGO AND ITS LEADER, AGENTS OF RUSSIA'S INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

In addition to co-optees and various digital channels and platforms, the Kremlin also uses state-sponsored and state-controlled proxy organizations, commonly referred to as “government organized non-governmental organizations” (GONGOs) to achieve its goals both inside and outside Russia. In the international realm, these Kremlin proxy organizations are a key part of the Kremlin’s “kleptocracy” network, as they lure in foreign actors and fund local partners and manipulate open societies to promote the Kremlin’s views, stir divisions, and distract international communities from pressing issues.

Natalya Valeryevna Burlinova (Burlinova) is the founder and president of the **Center for Support and Development of Public Initiative Creative Diplomacy** (PICREADI, also known as “Creative Diplomacy”). Burlinova has described PICREADI as being independent in thought and mission, but it is reliant on state funding. Despite trying to hide its relationship with the Russian government and its intelligence services, Russia’s intelligence services direct and fund Burlinova and PICREADI.

Since 2017, PICREADI has held an annual public policy event called “Meeting Russia” in Moscow, which PICREADI claims is to bring together “aspiring leaders” in academia, analytical centers, media, private sector, and governmental institutions to facilitate dialogue among a new generation of leaders and draw attention to critical points in Russia’s relations with the United States and the European Union. However, since at least 2017, Russia’s intelligence services have tracked the activities and career paths of past participants in PICREADI’s events.

Burlinova was designated pursuant to E.O. 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation.

PICREADI was designated pursuant to E.O. 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation, as well as for being owned or controlled by, directly or indirectly, Burlinova, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated persons described above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, individually or in the aggregate, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or exempt, OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons. In addition, financial institutions and other persons that engage in certain transactions or activities with the sanctioned entities and individuals may expose themselves to sanctions or be subject to an enforcement action. The prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any blocked person, or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

[Click here for more information on the individuals and entities designated today.](#)

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