

Treasury Sanctions Russian Intelligence Officers Supervising Election Influence Operations in the United States and Around the World

June 23, 2023

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned two Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers recently indicted by the Department of Justice who played a significant role in the Kremlin’s attempts to conduct global malign influence operations, including efforts to influence a local election in the United States.

“The Kremlin continues to target a key pillar of democracy around the world — free and fair elections,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “The United States will not tolerate threats to our democracy, and today’s action builds on the whole of government approach to protect our system of representative government, including our democratic institutions and elections processes.”

The Kremlin seeks to expand Russia’s influence by creating and exploiting societal divisions in the United States and among allies and partners; reducing confidence in democratic processes; weakening U.S. diplomatic ties; and encouraging anti-U.S. and anti-democratic political views. As part of its efforts, the Kremlin often uses social media as a tool for disseminating disinformation to confuse and mislead citizens globally and to co-opt witting U.S. persons to advance Russia’s operational and geopolitical goals.

In support of its influence operations, Russia has recruited and forged ties with people and groups around the world who are positioned to amplify and reinforce Russia’s disinformation efforts to further its goals of destabilizing democratic societies. These efforts have included using front organizations to promote connections between the Kremlin and its compatriots living abroad, to propagate disinformation, and to surreptitiously seek access to foreign officials, businesspeople, and other figures, in the United States and elsewhere, to advance Putin’s interests.

Russia’s intelligence services, including the FSB, support Kremlin-directed influence operations against the United States and its allies and partners, and often recruit individuals — known as “co-optees” — leveraging these individuals to sow discord within their own and other countries.

Today's action follows a series of OFAC designations that expose Russia's attempted [election interference efforts](#) and [destabilizing efforts in Ukraine](#). Specifically, today's action follows DOJ's [April 18, 2023 indictments of the same individuals](#), and is directly related to [the July 29, 2022 designation](#) of FSB co-optees Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov (Ionov) and Natalya Valeryevna Burlinova (Burlinova) and their organizations. OFAC designated Ionov and Burlinova pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation. On July 29, 2022, DOJ concurrently [indicted](#) Ionov for working on behalf of the Russian government in conjunction with the FSB.

FSB OFFICERS OVERSEE CO-OPTEE INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

The individuals designated today are FSB officers assigned to the FSB's Service for the Protection of the Constitutional System and the Fight Against Terrorism (the "FSB 2nd Service"), which has worked to undermine democratic processes in the United States and other countries through a network of co-optees. These FSB officers include Ionov's and Burlinova's main handler and his unit chief.

Yegor Sergeevich Popov (Popov) is an FSB 2nd Service officer who served as Ionov's primary handler. Popov frequently communicated with Ionov to gather information related to Ionov's foreign malign influence activities in the United States and elsewhere. Popov also often communicated with Burlinova to relay information in intelligence reports regarding her activities.

Ionov directed more than six U.S. co-conspirators, including two individuals who ran as candidates in local U.S. elections, to provide detailed information regarding the activities of several political groups, which Ionov subsequently compiled into reports for Popov and other FSB 2nd Service officers. In the Summer and Fall of 2019, Ionov and Popov communicated about a local U.S. election and Ionov's support of a candidate, who won in the primary contest.

From as early as 2015 through at least 2022, Popov worked with Burlinova and oversaw her activities on behalf of the FSB. In 2015, Popov assisted and provided guidance to Burlinova in her travels to the United States. Popov provided Burlinova a list of U.S. citizens and proposed possible approaches to interact with them. Burlinova provided Popov evaluations of how U.S. citizens responded to presentations, and who had had positive attitudes towards Russia and were prepared to continue to collaborate with her. In 2018, Burlinova informed Popov that two individuals she identified, who resided in Europe, were running for public office, and Burlinova boasted that these were the fruits of her labor and described the developments as soft power.

Popov reported to his FSB 2nd Service unit chief **Aleksei Borisovich Sukhodolov (Sukhodolov)**. Sukhodolov also worked with Ionov to conduct foreign malign influence operations around the world, including in the United States, Ukraine, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. Ionov directed reporting to Sukhodolov and other FSB officials of detailed information regarding the activities of several U.S. political groups. Ionov also reported on his malign influence activities to Sukhodolov, including his consulting role in a U.S. local election.

In late 2021, Sukhodolov worked with other FSB officers and a Russia-based institution to draft and submit grant applications on behalf of several FSB co-optees and their organizations and enterprises, which included Ionov and Burlinova.

OFAC designated Popov and Sukhodolov 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.

On April 18, 2023, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida [indicted Popov and Sukhodolov](#) for working on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation. Also on April 18, [DOJ filed a criminal complaint](#) in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, charging Burlinova with conspiring to violate 18 U.S.C. § 951 (acting as an agent of a foreign government) in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 371 (conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud the United States).

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 designated person, or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from OFAC's ability to designate and add persons to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to OFAC's [Frequently Asked Question 897](#). For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list, please refer to OFAC's [website](#).

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

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