



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 17, 2017

Senate Bill With Sanctions on Russia Seen as “Pre-emptive Strike Against Trump”

The Senate on June 15 passed a bill originally aimed at imposing sanctions on Iran, but amended to include Russia, by a 98-2 vote. Proving the old adage coined by the 19th century essayist Charles Dudley Warner that “politics makes strange bedfellows,” the two dissenting votes were cast by the noninterventionist Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and the leftist Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) The bill would make it difficult for President Trump to relax sanctions against Russia.



Though the title of the bill (S. 722) is “Countering Iran’s Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017,” Amendment 232, written by senators Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), extending the sanctions to also include Russia, was attached to the bill after being approved on a 97-2 vote. Only Paul and Mike Lee (R-Utah) voted against the amendment.

The amended bill carried the description: “To provide congressional review and to counter Iranian and Russian governments’ aggression.”

The executive director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, Daniel McAdams, told Russia’s RT network he believes that the Russian sanctions were imposed under “ridiculous pretexts” and are ultimately designed to hinder any attempts of the Trump administration to improve Russia-U.S. ties.

“[Members of] Congress try to tie the president’s hands, trying to remove his ability to make foreign policy, and they are doing it for a simple reason — they do not want the relations with Russia to improve,” McAdams told RT. He added that by striking an agreement with the Democrats on the issue “Republicans are launching a pre-emptive strike against their own president.”

An article posted on the website of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity stated:

As far as the formal justification of yet another anti-Russian move is concerned, McAdams believes that “the whole pretext of the sanctions is absurd,” in particular, the refrain of Russia’s alleged meddling in the US elections.

“Nobody would go down to the Senate [or] the House floor and say what exactly did [the Russians] do, how did they meddle in our relations, because nobody knows,” McAdams said.

The original bill named Iran’s support of the Syrian government of Bashar al Assad as justification for imposing sanctions and the amended version also named Russian support of Syria as a transgression deserving of sanction. The bill’s language includes:

(2) On December 18, 2014, the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 was enacted (Public Law 113-272; 22 U.S.C. 8921 et seq.), which includes provisions directing the President to *impose sanctions on foreign persons that the President determines to be entities owned or controlled by the Government of the Russian Federation or nationals of the Russian Federation that manufacture,*



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sell, transfer, or otherwise provide certain defense articles into Syria.[Italics added.]

McAdams addressed this portion of the bill as follows:

Citing Russia's alleged "aggression" in Syria as one of the reasons to roll over a new round of sanctions is another example of the inadequacy of the measure, McAdams argued.

"Who is in Syria illegally occupying territory, who is violating Syrian sovereignty?... The US military," he said, dubbing the sanctions "a reflection of lack of any creativity" in the Senate.

During the debate in the Senate before the vote on the amendment to extend the sanctions to Russia took place, one of the amendment's authors, Sherrod Brown, also spoke of Russia's alleged "continuing aggression in Syria."

While McAdams, for one, viewed the sanctions bill as an attempt to tie Trump's hands, should he attempt to scale back sanctions against Russia, any presumption that the Trump administration is sympathetic toward Russia's support of the Syrian government would be a false one. In fact, the administration has followed the same policy begun under former President Obama of supporting the forces who are attempting to remove Bashar al Assad from power.

These actions have been reported on in several recent articles in *The New American*, including "[Many of Trump's Staunchest Allies Feel Betrayed by Syria Attack](#)." In that report, Alex Newman wrote: "Many of President Donald Trump's staunchest supporters — the very people who put him in the White House — expressed feelings of anger and betrayal following the administration's illegal military attack on Syria."

In a follow-up article, "[Trump Attack on Syria Violates the Constitution and His Pledges](#)," Newman wrote: "President Donald Trump's attack on Syria last week was illegal and unconstitutional, legal experts and even many of his leading supporters argued, noting that the Constitution grants war powers to Congress and not the president."

In a May 5 article, we discussed a Russian proposal to establish a no-fly zone in Syria that would apply to U.S. planes, but as our title suggests: "[Russian No-fly Zone Plan for Syria Would Apply to U.S. Planes — But Only if We Send Them](#)."

In that article, we cited a 2013 ABC News report stating that "Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who has been vocal on the need for more U.S. action against the Assad regime, praised the finding by the government [regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime] and pressed Obama to offer 'lethal assistance' to rebel forces."

We noted that during his presidential campaign, Donald Trump seemed to be more in alignment with the noninterventionist stance of Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) than the blatantly interventionist position of McCain, one of the Senate's staunchest neoconservatives. We recalled that following a March 2016 meeting with the *Washington Post*, during which then-candidate Trump announced the members of his foreign policy team, the writers at the *Post* stated that Trump had outlined an "unabashedly non-interventionist approach to world affairs."

However, we noted, that noninterventionism now seems to be quickly evaporating, as was made apparent by Trump's decision to launch missiles against a Syrian base last month.

Paul and McCain represent two complete opposites when it come to being a steadfast advocate (in Paul's case) of minding our own business, and (in McCain's case) interfering in foreign areas that are none of our concern.



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We noted earlier that Paul was one of only two senators who voted against this bill to extend sanctions to Russia, as well as Iran. Yet McCain was one of the bill's biggest cheerleaders. During debate on the bill, he declared: "It is time to respond to Russia's attack on American Democracy [a reference to Russia's alleged interference in last year's presidential election] with strength, with resolve, with common purpose and with action."

The sanctions bill now goes to the House, where a reporter for *The Hill* wrote that it "faces an uncertain path."

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