

Russia Outraged Over US Move to Arm Ukraine, More Sanctions

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Moscow compared the legislation to a notorious Cold War-era provision and said it could poison bilateral ties and hinder cooperation on issues of global importance such as security.

"The openly confrontational nature of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act approved by both houses of the US Congress without debate and proper voting cannot cause anything but deep regret," foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said in a statement.

On Thursday, US lawmakers approved new economic sanctions against Russia, dealing a new blow to the country's struggling economy.

The legislation also authorises -- but does not legally require -- US President Barack Obama to provide lethal and non-lethal military aid to Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons, ammunition and "tactical troop-operated surveillance drones".

"A powerful bomb is being put under bilateral relations which is comparable to the notorious Jackson-Vanik amendment that was adopted in 1974 and stood in the way of cooperation for several decades," Lukashevich said.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment, restricting trade privileges, was a Cold War-era provision aimed at putting pressure on the former Soviet Union and has come to symbolize festering antagonism between the Kremlin and Washington.

"We are under the impression that those in Washington, who just would not renounce old

phobias, intend to turn back the clock," Lukashevich said in the statement.

"It would seem that serious challenges to international security call on Russia and the United States to join efforts," he added.

"At the same time US legislators are following in the footsteps of the Barack Obama administration by showing great zeal in destroying the framework of cooperation."

"We won't give in to blackmail, won't renounce our national interests and won't allow meddling in our domestic affairs."

The United States and the European Union have slapped several rounds of sanctions against Moscow over the March takeover of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Kiev and the West say Moscow has regular troops on the ground in eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin has denied the claim despite mounting evidence to the contrary.

The Russian authorities have been scrambling to halt the collapse of the ruble under the weight of falling oil prices and previous rounds of Western sanctions, spending over \$5 billion this month alone on market interventions.

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