

# U.S. 'Blacklists' Dozens of Russians in Magnitsky Case

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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**The**  **Moscow Times**

The United States has blacklisted dozens of Russian officials implicated in the prison death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, a U.S. media report said Tuesday.

The decision was revealed in comments from President Barack Obama's administration to a Senate bill that calls for sanctions against officials accused of wrongdoing in the Magnitsky case and of other human rights violations, The Washington Post [reported](#).

"Secretary [Hillary] Clinton has taken steps to ban individuals associated with the wrongful death of Sergei Magnitsky from traveling to the United States," the report quoted the bill as saying, adding that the blacklist contained fewer than 60 names.

A U.S. Embassy spokeswoman refused to comment on the report Tuesday and referred all questions to the State Department in Washington, which did not immediately respond to a telephone request.

If confirmed, the United States would be the first country to impose sanctions in the Magnitsky case, a move that is subject to much controversy among Moscow's Western partners.

A [bill](#) introduced by U.S. Senator Ben Cardin into Congress this spring proposes visa sanctions and the freezing of the U.S. assets of 60 Russian officials implicated in Magnitsky's death.

But the bill, whose 18 co-sponsors include former Republican presidential contender John McCain and independent Joseph Lieberman, has so far only been referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, according to the Library of Congress web site.

Lawmakers in the European Parliament and in the Netherlands have called for similar sanctions, but no European government, let alone the European Union in Brussels, has taken up action.

Diplomats and analysts speculated Tuesday that the reported blacklist might just reflect an attempt to convince senators to abandon their bill, which they said poses serious risks to the "reset" in relations between Washington and Moscow. Others speculated that the U.S. administration was testing the waters while behind-the-scenes negotiations are ongoing.

According to the newspaper report, the Obama administration's comment also says it has been warned by "senior Russian government officials that they will respond asymmetrically" by withdrawing cooperation on vital issues if the Senate legislation passes.

"Their argument is that we cannot expect them to be our partner in supporting sanctions against countries like Iran, North Korea and Libya, and sanction them at the same time," the administration is quoted as saying.

Masha Lipman, an analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center, said both Washington and Moscow had a strong interest in keeping the reset alive and therefore a compromise should be possible. "I suggest that this is not the end of the day," she said by telephone.

Lipman noted that officials in Moscow have yet to comment on the report.

Foreign Ministry spokespeople did not pick up their phones Tuesday, and The Washington Post quoted an unidentified spokesperson as saying the ministry would respond to questions "perhaps not until later in the week."

In an apparent tit-for-tat in response to both the Senate bill and the European initiatives, State Duma deputies last month announced a bill that would restrict entry, freeze assets and ban the business deals of foreigners deemed to have violated the rights of Russian citizens.

Maxim Rokhmistrov, first deputy chairman of the Liberal Democrat Party's Duma faction, said that if proved true, the U.S. blacklist amounts to a "hostile move."

The Duma bill on foreigners would be the "logical answer," he told The Moscow Times, adding that he saw a good chance that the bill would be passed during the fall session.

Magnitsky, a lawyer for Hermitage Capital, was arrested on tax charges in 2008 after he

accused senior Interior Ministry officials of embezzling \$230 million of state money through tax refunds. He died of health problems in pretrial detention in November 2009.

His supporters, led by Hermitage founder Bill Browder, have waged a campaign against a group of law enforcement officers whom they accuse of torturing and killing Magnitsky.

While government officials have reacted furiously to the calls for sanctions, President Dmitry Medvedev has tried to allay fears by ordering the Kremlin's human rights council to make an independent investigation.

Earlier this month, investigators opened a criminal case into two prison officials whom they accuse of negligence.

European diplomats said Tuesday that there was no majority in the EU to support Magnitsky sanctions because of fears that this would jeopardize the Kremlin's efforts to solve the case.

"As long as these efforts continue, I do not see a reason to impose sanctions — which would be counter-productive," said a senior diplomat from an EU member state, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Denis Daniilidis, spokesman for the EU delegation in Moscow, said none of the EU's 27 members should make any unilateral decisions in the case.

The issue has not yet been on the agenda of the Brussels council of ministers, he said.

Valery Borshchyov, a veteran trial lawyer who headed the investigation for the Kremlin's human rights council, said that while he understands the EU's fears, ultimately attention from abroad was the most important thing.

"The international attention to this case has already helped us a lot," he told The Moscow Times. "It is what makes our government act."

Meanwhile, Kommersant reported that a senior Interior Ministry investigator who worked on the Magnitsky case has been sacked. Natalya Vinogradova, deputy head of the tax fraud section of the ministry's investigative department, seemingly failed her reattestation because her name is not on a document outlining the ministry's new structure, the daily reported Tuesday, citing a copy of the document.

According to Magnitsky's supporters, Vinogradova was the supervisor of Oleg Silchenko, the main investigator of the case. She appears among the 60 names [listed](#) in Cardin's bill, according to the Russian-untouchables.com web site, which is run by Magnitsky's supporters.

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