

Russia Rails Against EU Sanctions, Lambasts U.S. Over Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

July 27, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

Russia has reacted angrily to additional sanctions imposed by the European Union over Moscow's role in the Ukraine crisis, saying they would hamper cooperation on security issues and undermine the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

Russia's Foreign Ministry also accused the United States, which has already imposed its own sanctions against Moscow, of contributing to the conflict in Ukraine through its support for the pro-Western government in Kiev.

The 28-nation EU reached an outline agreement on Friday to impose the first economic sanctions on Russia over its behavior in Ukraine but scaled back their scope to exclude technology for the crucial gas sector.

The EU also imposed travel bans and asset freezes on the chiefs of Russia's Federal Security Service and foreign intelligence service and a number of other top Russian officials, saying

they had helped shape Russian government policy that threatened Ukraine's sovereignty and national integrity.

"The additional sanction list is direct evidence that the EU countries have set a course for fully scaling down cooperation with Russia over the issues of international and regional security," Russia's Foreign Ministry said Saturday in a statement.

"[This] includes the fight against the proliferation of weapon of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime and other new challenges and dangers."

The EU had already imposed asset freezes and travel bans on dozens of senior Russian officials over Russia's annexation in March of Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea and its support for separatists battling Kiev's forces in eastern Ukraine.

The decision to move towards targeting sectors of Russia's economy came after last week's downing of a Malaysia Airlines plane, killing 298 people, in an area of eastern Ukraine held by the Russian-backed separatists.

The United States and other Western countries accuse the separatists of downing the plane with a surface-to-air missile supplied by Russia. The separatists deny shooting down the plane and Russia says it has provided no such weapons. Moscow has suggested Kiev's forces are to blame for the crash.

On Saturday, Britain's Foreign Office accused Russia of making "contradictory, mutually exclusive claims" in blaming Ukraine for the tragedy and said it was "highly likely" the separatists had brought it down with a Russian-supplied missile.

Slander Campaign

In a second statement on Saturday, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Washington shared responsibility for the crisis.

"The United States continues to push Kiev into the forceful repression of [Ukraine's] Russian-speaking population's discontent. There is one conclusion — the Obama administration has some responsibility both for the internal conflict in Ukraine and its severe consequences," the ministry said.

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, Europe's largest economy which also has strong trade ties with Russia, spoke out strongly in favor of the new EU sanctions against Moscow in an interview published on Saturday.

"After the death of 300 innocent people in the MH17 crash and the disrespectful roaming around the crash site of marauding soldiers, the behavior of Russia leaves us no other choice," he told Germany's Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper.

"We remain true to our course: cleverly calibrated and mutually agreed measures to raise the pressure and towards a willingness to have serious talks with Russia," he said in the interview, conducted on Friday.

German Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel told the Spiegel weekly in comments due to be

published on Sunday that the sanctions should above all hit Russia's oligarchs, arguing that the country's political system rested on them.

"We must freeze their [bank] accounts in European capitals and deny them the ability to travel," Gabriel said.

In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said he would hold talks in the Netherlands next Wednesday with his Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte on how to secure full access for international investigators to the site of the plane crash.

"This will require the cooperation of those in control of the crash site and the Ukrainian armed forces," he said.

The separatists remain in control of the area where the plane came down. A total of 193 Dutch nationals and 43 Malaysians were among the victims aboard MH17, which had been flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

Russia has said it wants an independent investigation into the crash, under U.N. auspices. The Kremlin said on Saturday that President Vladimir Putin had spoken by telephone with Australia's Prime Minister Tony Abbott about the need to allow international recovery experts safe access to the crash site.

At least 27 Australians were killed in the crash.

See also:

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