

Trump administration eases sanctions on Russian intelligence agency

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Washington: In a powerful signals of reconciliation, the Trump administration on Thursday eased sanctions imposed on Russian intelligence agency, Federal Security Service, by the erstwhile government.

File pic - Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin

The US Treasury Department issued a notice easing sanctions. In a statement, the department authorized certain transactions with the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) that are needed to request approval for the importation, distribution, or use of certain information technology products in Russia.

Last December, Obama imposed sanctions on two major Russian intelligence services -- the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) and the FSB, four individual officers of the GRU and three companies that allegedly provided material support for hacking operations aiming to interfere in the US presidential elections.

The US also ordered the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats suspected of spying and closed two compounds belonging to the Russian Embassy in response to Russia's interference in the US election and to a pattern of harassment of our diplomats overseas.

US President Donald Trump has hinted that he could lift the sanctions against Russia if Moscow proved helpful in battling terrorists and reaching other goals important to the United States.

Trump's openly pro-Russia stance has been scrutinized recently amid US intelligence's conclusion that Russia helped him win the presidential election through hacking activities.

Russia has denied being behind the cyber-intrusions, which targeted the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the private emails of Hillary Clinton's campaign Chairman John Podesta. Trump has repeatedly said he doubts the veracity of US intelligence blaming Moscow for the hacks.

- With Agency Inputs