

US issues list of Russian politicians who flourished during President Putin's reign

30/01/2018 08:41 by admin

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Vladimir Putin

Washington: The Trump administration late Monday released a long-awaited list of 114 Russian politicians and 96 oligarchs who have flourished during the reign of President Vladimir Putin, fulfilling a demand by Congress that the U.S. punish Moscow for interfering in the 2016 U.S. election.

Yet the administration paired that move with a surprising announcement that it had decided not to punish anybody "for now" under new sanctions retaliating for the election-meddling. Some U.S. lawmakers said President Donald Trump was giving a free pass to those Congress intended to target, fueling further questions about whether the president is too soft on Russia.

The list comprises a who's who of politically connected Russians in the country's elite class. The idea is to name-and-shame those believed to be benefiting from Putin's tenure just as the United States works to isolate his government diplomatically and economically.

Being on the list doesn't trigger any U.S. sanctions on the individuals, although many are already targeted under earlier sanctions.

Known informally as the "Putin list," the report lists 114 senior political figures in Russia's government, including 42 of Putin's aides, Cabinet ministers including Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, and top officials in Russia's leading spy agencies, the FSB and GRU. The CEOs of major state-owned companies, including energy giant Rosneft and Sberbank, are also on the list.

So are 96 wealthy Russians deemed oligarchs by the Treasury Department, which said each is believed to have assets totaling \$1 billion or more. Some are the most famous of wealthy Russians, among them tycoons Roman Abramovich and Mikhail Prokhorov, who challenged Putin in the 2012 election. Aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska, a figure in the Russia investigation over his ties to former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, is included.

The Trump administration had until Monday to issue the list under a law passed last year. After declining to answer questions about it throughout the day Monday, the Treasury Department released it with little fanfare 12 minutes before midnight.

- AP