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Russia Sanctions and the Coming Crackdown on Americans

Baniel McAdams

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Last week I wrote an article and did an interview explaining that in my reading of the new Russia sanctions bill just signed by President Trump, there is a measure opening the door to a US government crackdown on some of the non-mainstream media. In particular, Section 221 of the “Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act” would punish “persons” who are “engaging in transactions with the intelligence or defense sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation.”

At first one might think this is reading too much into the text, however as a twelve year Capitol Hill veteran bill-reader I can assure you that these bills are never written in a simple, expository manner. There is always a subtext, and in this case we must consider the numerous instances where the Director of Central Intelligence and other senior leadership in the US intelligence community have attempted to establish the idea that foreign news channels such as RT or Sputnik News are not First Amendment protected press, but rather tools of a foreign intelligence organization.

You can see in the current atmosphere, where anti-Russia hysteria has spread like typhoid, how readily-accepted such a notion would be by many. The reds are under our beds and the Russkies have taken over our airwaves.

I don't think the crackdown will stop at Russian government funded news organizations like RT and Sputnik, however. Once the initial strike is made at the lowest hanging fruit, the second wave will target Russia-focused organizations not funded by governments but that challenge the official US government line that Russia is our number one enemy and its government must be overthrown. Popular private alternative websites like The Duran and Russia Insider will likely be next on the list for prosecution.

Sound farfetched? Think of it this way (I can assure you the neocons do): if the Russian government and RT are opposed to sanctions and you operate a website that also takes a line in opposition to Russia sanctions are you not doing the work of Russian intelligence? Are you not seeking to influence your readers in a manner that Russian intelligence would want? Are you not "engaging in transactions" even over the airwaves?

And after this second wave you can be sure there will be a push to move on other alternative media that has nothing to do with Russia but that opposes US interventionist foreign policy: ZeroHedge, Lew Rockwell, Ron Paul Institute, ConsortiumNews, etc.

Crazy, you say? Don't forget: this war against us already started last year when the Washington Post ran a front page article accusing all of the above of being Russian agents!

What would be next? Do you read any of these alternative news sites? Do you pass along articles that oppose US sanctions policy toward Russia? You are engaging in transactions. You will be subject to "sanctions" as described in the "Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act," which is now the law of the land.

This would never happen, you might say. The government would never compile, analyze, and target private news outlets just because they deviate from the official neocon Washington line.

Perhaps not yet. But some US government funded "non-governmental" organizations are already doing just that.

The German Marshall Fund has less to do with Germany these days than it did when founded after WWII as a show of appreciation for the US Marshall Fund. These days it's mostly funded by the US government, allied governments (especially in the Russia-hating Baltics), neocon grant-making foundations, and the military-industrial complex. Through its strangely Soviet-sounding "Alliance for Securing Democracy" project it has launched something called "Hamilton 68: A New Tool to Track Russian Disinformation on Twitter."

This project monitors 600 Twitter accounts that the German Marshall Fund claims are "accounts that are involved in promoting Russian influence and disinformation goals." Which accounts does this monitor? It won't tell us. How does it choose which ones to monitor? It won't tell us. To what end? Frighteningly, it won't tell us.

How ironic that something called the German Marshall Fund is bringing Stasi-like tactics to silence alternative media and opinions in the United States!

So what does the “Hamilton 68” project do? In its own words it firstly “shows tweets from official Russian propaganda outlets in English, and a short post discussing the themes of the day. This is Russia’s overt messaging.”

But it goes further than that. It tracks and stores information about others who have no connection to Russia but who “on their own initiative reliably repeat and amplify Russian themes.” This is what the German Marshall Fund calls a “network” of second tier disinformation distributors.

What does this “network” of people with no connection to Russia but who amplify Russian “themes” do?

It “reflects Russian messaging priorities, but that does not mean every name or link you see on the dashboard is pro-Russian. The network sometimes amplifies stories that Russia likes, or people with like-minded views but no formal connection to Russia.”

So, according to the self-proclaimed alliance for securing democracy you might not even know it when you are pushing Russian state propaganda!

Do you see what they are doing here? They are using US and other government money in an effort to eliminate any news organization or individual who deviates from the official neocon foreign policy line on Russia, Syria, Ukraine, etc. They are trying to eliminate any information that challenges the neocon line. To criminalize it.

In fact they admit that they are seeking to silence alternative viewpoints:

Our objective in providing this dashboard is to help ordinary people, journalists, and other analysts identify Russian messaging themes and detect active disinformation or attack campaigns as soon as they begin. Exposing these messages will make information consumers more resilient and reduce the effectiveness of Russia’s attempts to influence Americans’ thinking, and deter this activity in the future by making it less effective.

The very Soviet-sounding “Alliance for Securing Democracy” project description ends with a suitably authoritarian warning, ripped from the pages of 1984, *Darkness at Noon*, or Erich Honecker’s “how-to” guide:

We are not telling you what to think, but we believe you should know when someone is trying to manipulate you. What you do with that information is up to you.

Chilling, no? And much of it is being done with your money by your government and in your name.

That is why the neocons and their myriad think tanks (government-funded in many cases) would like nothing more than to shut down our upcoming Peace and Prosperity 2017 Conference, to be held right at their front door! They cannot stand an open debate about Washington’s hyper-

interventionist foreign policy. They don't want to talk about all their failed wars – and they *really* don't want to talk about the wars they have planned and are pushing.

We are not the anti-Americans. They are. They hate the First Amendment. They hate debate. They hate us.

How can we fight back? One very easy way is to show them a full house at our conference! Just by showing up you are poking a neocon in the eye.

Can you imagine how furious they were when last year's Peace and Prosperity Conference was broadcast on CSPAN?

Thanks to the support of our very generous Host Committee we can keep the ticket price as low as possible. We want to see all of you there! You will get a full day of fantastic and insightful speakers, the opportunity to network and plot with like-minded individuals, and a very nice luncheon with plenty of coffee and tea to boot! We also managed to get a great rate at the hotel to save you some money!

And you'll drive the neocons nuts! What are you waiting for! Book your ticket today!