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US Pushes Broad New Sanctions Against Russia at G-7

By Jason Ditz

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The Obama Administration is pushing for harsh new sanctions against Russia to be unveiled at the G-7 this week, saying sanctions will target Russia's military exports as well as other sectors of its economy.

Nominally, the new sanctions aim to "punish" Russia for not using its influence to shut down protests in eastern Ukraine seeking enhanced autonomy. The G-7 is also preparing a statement condemning the "illegal" protesters and reiterating its opposition to the Russian annexation of Crimea.

The White House says the next round of sanctions has been designed to particularly hurt companies held by allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin, though previous attempts at sanctions said the same thing and didn't amount to much at all.

The US has only limited trade ties to Russia to break, and thus Europe is expected to do most of the heavy lifting. The G-7 can't really guarantee EU action, however, as any EU sanctions would need to be unanimous, and many nations in central and eastern Europe are averse to new sanctions, believing they would harm their economies more than the Russian economy.

There is a growing split within the administration on that score as well, with some wanting to push unilateral US sanctions beyond what the Europeans would ever go along with, and others

suggesting the myth of a “unified” front needs to be sustained, even if it means slowing the sanctions war down.