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Report: White House Draws Up List of Sanctions Relief Measures for Russia



Russia's Primorsk oil loading terminal on the Baltic (file image)

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Just as the Biden administration's tanker sanctions are beginning to affect Russian oil exports, the Trump White House has begun looking at options to lift U.S. restrictions on Russian entities, according to Reuters. The State Department and Treasury Department have been asked to draft a list of measures for potentially easing stringent U.S. sanctions, which have been the most effective tools of economic persuasion that the West has deployed against Moscow.

The news aligns with a personal falling-out between President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, which burst into public view with a contentious news conference at the White House on Friday. After a heated exchange with Trump and Vice President JD Vance, Zelensky was asked to leave the building. Trump subsequently announced a suspension of all military aid to Ukraine, a profound blow for Ukraine's front-line forces.

Sources close to the White House told Reuters that the sanctions relief measures under consideration would be for individual Russian citizens and companies. Ukraine's government responded with a call for the White House to wait for more progress in peace talks, in order to maintain leverage to bring an end to the invasion. However, Russia has indicated that negotiations over Ukraine are only part of the discussion with the Trump administration: the bilateral talks also cover something else - "normalizing" relations between Moscow and Washington.

"Of course, if we are talking about normalizing bilateral relations, then [Russian interests] need to be freed from this negative burden of so-called sanctions," said Dmitri Petrov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "It is probably too early to talk about anything [being lifted] . . . we have not heard any official statements."

Current U.S. sanctions include significant restrictions on Russia's energy sector and its tanker fleet. The previous administration's efforts to target Russia-linked "shadow fleet" tankers have forced Russian exporters to drop their prices below \$60 for the first time in more than a year, and tanker rates from Russian loading ports have soared.