

# Alerting the World to RT's Global Covert Activities

Fact Sheet

Office of the Spokesperson

September 13, 2024

Today, the United States is designating three entities and two individuals for their connection to Russia's destabilizing actions abroad. According to new information, much of which originates from employees of Russian state-funded RT (formerly "Russia Today"), we now know that RT moved beyond being simply a media outlet and has been an entity with cyber capabilities. It is also engaged in information operations, covert influence, and military procurement. These operations are targeting countries around the world, including in Europe, Africa, and North and South America.

The United States supports the free flow of information. We are not taking action against these entities and individuals for the content of their reporting, or even the disinformation they create and spread publicly. We are taking action against them for their covert influence activities. Covert influence activities are not journalism. The United States will always stand for freedom of expression, including for those with whom we disagree. We encourage dissent, open debate, and free discourse. But we will not stand for attempts by state actors to carry out covert activities with the goal of hijacking that discourse. Consistent with General License 25F, these targets may continue to engage in journalism and media operations not prohibited by U.S. sanctions.

In June, together with the governments of the UK and Canada, the State Department's Global Engagement Center exposed the Russian government's efforts to engage in subversive activity and electoral interference targeting Moldova. As we previously described, some of these covert efforts include RT personnel's involvement in providing direct support to U.S.-designated fugitive Moldovan oligarch ILAN SHOR (SHOR) for several years with Russian government assent. Leveraging its expanded covert capabilities, RT will almost certainly coordinate with traditional Russian intelligence services to try to manipulate the outcome of the October 2024 Moldovan presidential election in Moscow's favor.

RT and its employees, including Editor-in-Chief Margarita Simonyan, have directly coordinated with the Kremlin to support Russian government efforts to influence the October 2024 Moldovan election. Specifically, in coordination with the Kremlin, Simonyan leverages the state-funded platforms for which she serves in leadership positions – namely RT, Sputnik, and their parent company FEDERAL STATE UNITARY ENTERPRISE INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION AGENCY ROSSIYA SEGODNYA (ROSSIYA SEGODNYA) – to attempt to foment unrest in Moldova, likely

with the specific aim of causing protests to turn violent. RT is aware of and prepared to assist Russia's plans to incite protests should the election not result in a Russia-preferred candidate winning the presidency.

The Department is designating the following entities pursuant to section 1(a)(vii) of E.O. 14024 for being owned or controlled by or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation:

- **ROSSIYA SEGODNYA** is a Russian state-owned and state-funded broadcast agency headquartered in Moscow. Individuals affiliated with ROSSIYA SEGODNYA coordinated with the Kremlin to attempt to foment unrest in Moldova, likely with the specific aim of causing protests to turn violent.
- **AUTONOMOUS NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION TV-NOVOSTI (TV-NOVOSTI)** is a federally funded organization associated with ROSSIYA SEGODNYA and controls the RT media channel. Elements within TV-NOVOSTI and RT, working with the Russian Government, have planned to interfere in the upcoming Moldovan presidential election.

TV-NOVOSTI is also being designated pursuant to section 1(a)(ii)(B) of E.O. 14024 for being responsible for or complicit in, or having directly or indirectly engaged or attempted to engage in, interference in a United States or other foreign government elections for or on behalf of, or for the benefit of, directly or indirectly, the Government of the Russian Federation.

Pursuant to section 1(A)(iii)(C) of E.O. 14024, the following individual is being designated for being or having been a leader, official, senior executive officer, or member of the board of directors of ROSSIYA SEGODNYA:

- **DMITRY KONSTANTINOVICH KISELEV (KISELEV)** has been the Director General of ROSSIYA SEGODNYA since 2013.

These designations follow those of our allies and partners who have previously imposed sanctions on ROSSIYA SEGODNYA and TV-NOVOSTI respectively.

## **Targeting a Scheme to Undermine Moldova's Electoral Processes**

In response to Russia's continued efforts to undermine Moldovan democracy and interfere in Moldova's electoral processes, the Department is imposing additional sanctions on a critical avenue of Russia's malign influence in Moldova.

The Department is designating the following entity and individual pursuant to section 1(a)(i) of E.O. 14024 for operating or having operated in the financial services sector of the Russian Federation economy:

- **AVTONOMNAYA NEKOMMERCHESKAYA ORGANIZATSIYA SODEYSTVIYA RAZVITIYU MEZHDUNARODNOVO SOTRUDNICHESTVA EVRAZIYA (ANO EVRAZIYA)**
- **NELLI ALEKSEYEVNA PARUTENKO (PARUTENKO)**

ANO EVRAZIYA and PARUTENKO are responsible for a scheme supporting the malign influence efforts of SHOR. PARUTENKO is the General Director of ANO EVRAZIYA and the former treasurer of the U.S.-designated SHOR PARTY. ANO EVRAZIYA, with PARUTENKO at the helm, executed a scheme to move money via U.S.-designated PROMSVYAZBANK PUBLIC JOINT STOCK COMPANY (PROMSVYAZBANK) into Moldova to buy votes to influence the upcoming Moldovan elections. Under the guise of “humanitarian assistance,” ANO EVRAZIYA orchestrated this scheme, but it is widely known to be a vote-buying campaign designed to support pro-Kremlin candidates illicitly and thereby undermine Moldova’s democracy.

ANO EVRAZIYA is also being designated pursuant to section 1(a)(vii) of E.O. 14024 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, PROMSVYAZBANK, a person whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024.

## **Exposing and Disrupting Additional Elements of RT’s Global Malign Activities**

In addition to these designations, the U.S. Department of State is actively engaged in a diplomatic effort to inform other governments around the world of Russia’s use of RT to conduct covert activities and encourage them to take action to limit Russia’s ability to interfere in foreign elections and procure weapons for its war against Ukraine. The Department is urging partners to recognize the gravity of this threat and to treat RT’s covert operations seriously. Additional examples of RT’s global malign influence include the use of cyber capabilities for influence and covert activities.

### **RT’s Cyber Capabilities:**

As a part of RT’s expanded capabilities, in Spring 2023, the Russian government embedded within RT an entity with cyber operational capabilities and ties to Russian intelligence. This cyber entity has focused primarily on influence and intelligence operations all over the world. Under the cover of RT, information produced through this entity’s capabilities flows to Russia’s intelligence services, Russian media outlets, Russian mercenary groups, and other various state and proxy arms of the Russian Government. Head of RT Margarita Simonyan and RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief Anton Anisimov have had direct, witting knowledge of this enterprise.

### **RT Engages in Procuring Lethal Aid for The Russian Military in Ukraine:**

A large online crowdfunding platform operating within the quasi-intelligence, state-funded RT and through social media channels is providing material support and weaponry to Russia's military units in Ukraine. RT Deputy Editor-in-Chief and Head of International Broadcasting for Sputnik Anton Anisimov administers this RT-run military crowdfunding program.

Military equipment and supplies, to include sniper rifles, suppressors, personal weapon sights, body armor, clothing, night-vision equipment, drones, radio equipment, and diesel generators are imported in small orders to avoid unwanted scrutiny. Some of this equipment has been sourced from the People's Republic of China (PRC), to include reconnaissance drones made by PRC-based entities and R&D support in the production of said drones in coordination with the Russian Ministry of Defense.

### **RT's Covert Influence Around the World:**

RT uses proxy outlets that purport to be independent from Russia to covertly disseminate content and messaging globally and to evade western responses to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. We know that for over two years, RT has leveraged its extensive state funding to covertly recruit and pay social media personalities and provide them with unbranded content to disseminate and promote around the world while hiding RT's involvement. RT employees are leveraging intelligence tactics, front companies, and network technologies to obfuscate their role in these covert efforts. There are several examples of this covert influence activity:

One online platform secretly run by RT is African Stream. Per the outlet's website, [africanstream.media](http://africanstream.media), it is active on a wide range of social media platforms.

Additionally, in Germany, RT covertly runs the Berlin-based English language platform "Red" ([thered.stream](http://thered.stream)). Despite what the entity's website claims, Red is a successor to the now-defunct RT-linked platform Redfish operating under Turkiye-based Joint Stock Company AFA Medya. Per German newspaper Tagesspiel, Red has participated in the organization of protests in Germany.

Another example of RT's covert activity is in France, where RT hired a Paris-based journalist to run influence projects targeting French speakers.

The Russian Government is also engaged in operations meant to destabilize the government of Argentina and escalate tensions between Argentina and its neighbors. We expect that the Russian government will leverage RT, its affiliates, and its overall covert playbook in pursuit of these malign efforts.

## **Sanctions Implications**

As a result of today's sanctions-related actions, and in accordance with E.O. 14024, as amended, all property and interests in property of the designated persons described above that are in the United States or in possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and

must be reported to the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Additionally, all entities and individuals that have ownership, either directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked.

All transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons are prohibited unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC or exempt. These prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any blocked person and the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

The power and integrity of U.S. government sanctions derive not only from the U.S. government's ability to designate and add persons to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List, but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior.

Petitions for removal from the SDN List may be sent to [OFAC.Reconsideration@treasury.gov](mailto:OFAC.Reconsideration@treasury.gov). Petitioners may also refer to the Department of State's delisting page.