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US Imposes New Sanctions on Russia

By Jason Ditz
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Continuing what may ultimately be a very brief flurry of anti-Russia sanctions, the Obama Administration today announced a new round of sanctions against 5 Russian officials. Administration officials say that technically these are unrelated to allegations of Russian “hacking” of the election, though the timing makes it clear this is part of ongoing “retaliation.”

With President-elect Donald Trump taking office in a week and a half, these moves may not last long, with Trump aide Kellyanne Conway saying that Trump could well “reconsider” any sanctions imposed by the administration in the name of proportionality.

Trump has also suggested he’d be looking to roll back some of these moves, and that was a big reason why Russia did not launch any retaliatory diplomatic action after the Obama Administration expelled 35 of their diplomats and seized a pair of their compounds, with Russian officials saying they expect Trump to change course when he gets into office.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter was the latest official to push for more anti-Russia actions, insisting yesterday that the US “should not limit ourselves” in any way in anti-Russia measures, declaring the alleged hacking a “aggressive attack against our very democracy.”

Between this, and Sen. Ben Cardin’s declaration that Russia “attacked us,” there appears to be a significant shift in the rhetoric surrounding the hacks in recent days, with officials trying to position the matter not as “interference” in the election but as an overt act of war.