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Trump Suggests Lifting Russia Sanctions for Nuclear Arms Cut

By Jason Ditz
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While initially against the recent Russia sanctions imposed by the Obama Administration, President-elect Donald Trump now seems to be positioning himself as not just unilaterally ending them, but rather trying to use them as leverage in negotiating further deals with the Russian Federation.

On Friday Trump indicated in an interview that the sanctions, previously assumed to be one of his first priorities to remove, would stay in place for now, and on Sunday he suggested that they could be used as part of a grand bargain for negotiating a nuclear arms cut with Russia.

Trump's new comments did not include any specifics on the size of such cuts, but he did say that he believes nuclear weapons need to be "reduced very substantially." It is also unclear if he envisions Russian cuts as a quid pro quo for sanctions relief, or is just using it as a bargaining chip for mutual agreements on cuts from both sides.

If he envisions the US cutting its nuclear arsenal as part of the deal, that would be a big shift in his talking points too, as Trump has previously indicated that he intends to not only modernize, but greatly expand the US nuclear arsenal in his administration.

Convincing Russia of mutual cuts likely wouldn't be hard, as US Congressional hawks are usually the big stumbling blocks to such deals at any rate. A proposal for Russia to cut its arsenal for sanctions relief, at a time when NATO is greatly expanding its military presence along the Russian frontier, however, would likely be a non-starter.