

Hostile US Actions Against RT and Sputnik News

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The latest US hostile action against Russia requires a company providing services for RT America to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), along with an FBI probe of Sputnik News to check for FARA violations.

Enacted in 1938 one year before WW II began, it requires agents representing foreign powers politically or quasi-politically to disclose their relationship with other governments, along with information about their activities and finances.

Originally administered by the State Department, FARA later came under Justice Department jurisdiction.

From 1938 until amended in 1966, enforcement focused on foreign propagandists, during WW II used in 23 criminal cases, the last time America had an enemy, none since then except invented ones to justify unjustifiable imperial wars.

Since 1966, FARA focused on foreign lobbying instead of propaganda. From then to now, no one was convicted of violating the law.

In 1995, the term “political propaganda” was removed from removed from its text. FARA was created to target foreign agents and lobbyists as amended, not media operations.

Targeting RT America through its services supplier and Sputnik News violates the letter and spirit of the law, perhaps prelude to censoring, then banning both operations in America.

RT’s editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan called what’s going on a possible move to undermine RT and Sputnik News, saying:

“The war the US establishment wages with our journalists is dedicated to all the starry-eyed idealists who still believe in freedom of speech. Those who invented it, have buried it.”

Earlier this year, congressional legislation called the Agents Registration Modernization and Enforcement Act was introduced, aiming to broaden FARA’s scope with RT and Sputnik News in mind.

Simonyan condemned it, saying

“I wonder how US media outlets, which have no problems while working in

Moscow...not required to register as foreign agents, will treat this initiative.”

Sputnik’s Washington bureau editor-in-chief Mindia Gavasheli blasted the FBI’s investigation into its operations, saying it’s

“not surprising, since the atmosphere of hysteria in relation to everything that belongs to Russia has been created in the country, and everything with the word ‘Russian’ is seen through the prism of spy mania.”

“We are journalists, and mostly Americans work here. We believe that any assumption that we are engaged in anything other than journalism is an absolute lie and fabrication.”

The same goes for RT. FARA was never intended to censor or interfere with media operations. It targeted Axis propagandists, the law a relic of that time, out-of-line to use against legitimate Russian media.

I’ve been interviewed by both operations. I’m a commentator, journalist, analyst, not a propagandist – nor are others like myself I personally know who’ve appeared on one or both networks.

Law Professor Jonathan Turley called hostile moves against Russian media in America “cross(ing) a long-observed red line...”

“Countries around the world have long accused media of being tools of foreign governments as a pretense for (wrongful) investigations and arrests.”

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called US hostile actions against RT and Sputnik News an attempt to censor their operations, a cause for great concern. US and other foreign correspondents in Russia operate freely without interference.

If RT and Sputnik News are censored, undermined or shut down, Moscow will no doubt respond in kind – in keeping with what Sergey Lavrov called “parity,” the criterion Washington established.

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