

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 12, 2020

The Honorable Stavros Lambrinidis
Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United States
2175 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Ambassador Lambrinidis:

We are writing to urge the European Union to take steps to substantially increase economic pressure on and isolation of Russian national Yevgeniy Prigozhin. As you know, Mr. Prigozhin has been sanctioned and indicted by the United States for his role in the Kremlin's 2016 attack on the U.S. election. The Wagner Group, an entity closely tied to Prigozhin, has been sanctioned by the United States for its role in support of Russian forces in Ukraine. We know that Mr. Prigozhin and his associated firms remain actively engaged in spreading malign influence. As the presidential election in the United States draws closer, our concerns about foreign interference here have intensified. These threats, however, are not limited to the United States — given the broad reach and expanding nature of Prigozhin and the Wagner Group's malign activities abroad, we urge the European Union to take steps to constrain their ability to operate and to deter the Kremlin from engaging in these activities.

For years, Mr. Prigozhin has been a driving force behind the Kremlin's malign influence. Beginning as early as 2014, his leadership and funding of the Internet Research Agency was a key element of Russia's attack on the U.S. election. Special Counsel Robert Mueller indicted Mr. Prigozhin and the Internet Research Agency for these activities.

Since 2014, Mr. Prigozhin has also acted as an agent of Kremlin security interests around the world, primarily through the Russian security firm Wagner. This company, which employs primarily Russian mercenaries, was instrumental in leading attacks on Ukrainian forces in Donbas. Wagner is also reportedly active in Syria, Libya, Madagascar, Sudan, Venezuela, and the Central African Republic. These efforts by Wagner support Kremlin military objectives as well as the business and financial interests of the company in mining and other sectors. Wagner has also actively interfered in the democratic processes of many of these countries. Thus, Mr. Prigozhin and his allied companies continue to pose a threat to western security interests and to our democratic institutions. They also provide the Kremlin a deniable tool to advance its malign policies.

The U.S. and European Union should be unified in facing this common threat and take concrete measures to isolate this malign actor and his affiliated firms. This includes sanctions, but also a joint diplomatic approach to urge that countries avoid engaging with Mr. Prigozhin, Wagner and any other organization associated with him. As we have on other important issues, joint U.S.-EU diplomatic and economic isolation efforts could be very effective in sending a clear message to partners around the world: Wagner is a significant threat to peace and security that should be avoided at all costs.

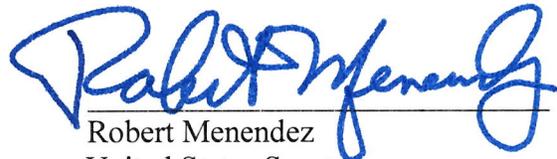
The effectiveness of the U.S. sanctions regime is only as strong as our multilateral alliances. Our ability to punish, deter, and put pressure on Prigozhin and respond forcefully to his malign behavior would be significantly enhanced by the active participation of the EU. We urge Brussels to work closely with the United States in developing a more tightly coordinated sanctions and diplomatic effort that would further constrain Mr. Prigozhin, his affiliated companies, and his agents abroad.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



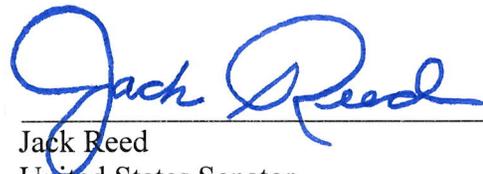
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United States Senator



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