

Duckworth, Durbin, Menendez Introduce Legislation to Ensure U.S. Pushes Back Against Russia Reportedly Placing Bounties on American Troops

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— Combat Veteran and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), a member of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) who served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years, and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined U.S. Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR) today in introducing the Russia Bounty Response Act of 2020. With the Trump Administration's failure to respond to the Russian Federation's reported program to pay bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American and other allied troops in Afghanistan, the legislation would require President Trump to impose new sanctions on any Russian person, government official or entity involved in the program.

“Donald Trump’s silence in the face of reported Russian bounties on the heads of our troops is a complete dereliction of duty,” said Duckworth. “This bill will force Trump to act by putting important policies in place to ensure our nation addresses the threat of Russia’s alliance with the Taliban and influence in the South and Central Asian region over the long term and by enacting sanctions, if warranted. Even if Trump refuses to say it publicly, we know that Vladimir Putin is no friend to democracy, which is one of the reasons why I’m proud to join my Senate colleagues in taking a stand for the safety of our troops and against malign action from Putin.”

“Rather than fight back against Russian threats against our troops, the President has neglected his responsibility to our military as Commander-in-Chief. The President’s inaction and deafening silence has only demonstrated that he is more concerned with the approval of the Kremlin than bounties on the lives of our soldiers,” said Durbin. “By introducing the Russia Bounty Response Act, my colleagues and I are taking the stance the President should have months ago. We will not stand idly by when a foreign leader puts a bounty on the heads of American soldiers.”

The Russia Bounty Response Act also bolsters resources to counter Russian threats and malign influence in South and Central Asia, requiring new and enhanced diplomatic efforts to counter the Kremlin’s influence in the region. The legislation also authorizes \$50 million per year in rewards for individuals who provide information on Russian bounties against U.S. Armed Forces and \$30 million per year for the State Department’s Global Engagement Center programming to counter Russian influence in South and Central Asia.

Since the allegations about Russia’s bounty program first emerged publicly, Duckworth spoke on the Senate floor to condemn Donald Trump for allegedly knowing for months that Russia secretly offered bounties to militants for the killing of American troops, but doing nothing to protect those troops. She has continuously called attention to Trump’s silence and has called for a U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the reports.

A copy of the Russia Bounty Response Act of 2020 may be found [here](#).

Key provisions of the legislation include:

Responding to the Threat to Our Troops:

- Requires the President to certify whether or not the Russian government offered, ordered, directed, or was otherwise responsible for bounties for the killing of members of the U.S. Armed Forces or members of NATO’s Resolute Support Mission.

- If the President certifies that the Russian government did so, the President shall impose asset blocking and visa ban sanctions on:
 - o President Vladimir Putin or any person acting for or on behalf of him;
 - o Any senior Russian government official involved in the bounties;
 - o Any Russian defense or intelligence official involved in the bounties.
- Requires the President to use all available authorities to impose asset blocking sanctions on entities within the Russian government's defense and intelligence sectors.
- Requires the President to use all available authorities to impose asset blocking sanctions on persons that facilitate illicit and corrupt activities on behalf of President Putin, including oligarchs, political figures, and their family members.
- Authorizes \$50 million per year for rewards for individuals who provide information on Russian bounties against U.S. Armed Forces under the State Department's Rewards for Justice program, running for fiscal years 2021 through 2026.

Countering Russian Threats and Malign Influence in South & Central Asia:

- Requires a report assessing the threats and challenges from the Russian Federation facing the U.S. and the NATO alliance in Afghanistan.
- Directs the Secretary of State to seek to establish a U.S.-Afghanistan Working Group to address the threat the Russian Federation poses to security in Afghanistan.
- Requires a regional strategy for how the U.S. will diplomatically counter Russian influence in the region of South and Central Asia.
- Requires the creation of a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) position in the Bureau of South and Central Asia focused on countering Russian influence.
- Requires the appointment of a Special Envoy to Counter Russian Influence in South and Central Asia.
- Authorizes \$30 million per year for Global Engagement Center programming to counter Russian influence in the countries of South and Central Asia, running for fiscal years 2021 through 2026.

- Expands the Countering Russian Influence Fund to countries in South and Central Asia that the Secretary of State determines are vulnerable to malign Russian influence.
- Requires a report on the net worth and assets of Vladimir Putin.