

Putin: Russia list is driven by Trump foes

MOSCOW (AP) — Mixing irony with scorn, President Vladimir Putin on Thursday described a new list including Russian officials and tycoons under a U.S. sanctions law as a hostile and “stupid” move spearheaded by President Donald Trump’s political foes, but he said the Kremlin will refrain from retaliation for now.

Putin’s reluctance to criticize Trump shows that he still hopes for normalizing ties with Washington.

At the same time, the U.S. move could help the Russian leader in his re-election bid in March.

Some observers warn that the blanket list of 210 names, which reads like a who’s who in Russian officialdom and business elite, could further fuel anti-Western feelings in Russia and bolster support for Putin.

Putin immediately struck that chord, pointing that those blacklisted by the U.S. control companies employing millions of Russians. He cast the U.S. move as a blow to ordinary people.

“All of us, all 146 million, have been put on some kind of list,” he said at a meeting with activists of his campaign. “Certainly, this is an unfriendly move, which further exacerbates the already strained Russia-US relations and hurts international relations as a whole.”

The list, ordered by Congress in response to alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, had spooked rich Russians who fear it could make them informally blacklisted in the global financial system.

Gag order on Afghan data was a mistake

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an abrupt reversal, the U.S. military on Tuesday said it made a mistake when it ordered an independent federal auditor to stop providing the public with information about U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan that help to measure how the 16-year-old war is going.

Just hours after the report was publicly released, the U.S.-led NATO coalition in Afghanistan issued a statement blaming “human

error” for the order, and provided a few segments of the data that has been restricted. The newly released information revealed that 44 percent of Afghanistan is contested or under the control of insurgents.

Other previously available information on the size, attrition and performance of the Afghan forces continue to be unavailable.

President Donald Trump has announced a new Afghanistan strategy aimed at breaking a battlefield stalemate by accelerating Afghan-led operations against the Taliban.



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