

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 12, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Bessent:

We write to request an explanation of the Trump Administration's 17-month halt of frequent and escalating Russia sanctions to counter evasion that feeds the Kremlin's war machine.

From February 2022 to January 2025, the Departments of the Treasury and State implemented 111 sets of sanctions in response to Russia's war of aggression, with each set targeting up to hundreds of entities and individuals globally.¹ Consistent U.S. action helped disrupt procurement networks, raise costs for Russia, and demonstrate that the Kremlin cannot escape pressure while brutally attacking Ukraine. In contrast, the Trump Administration has issued sanctions once under its Russia authority, and it has not used that authority to address rampant evasion of sanctions and export controls. Due to this inaction, over 1,000 additional companies, individuals, and vessels supporting Russia's military industrial base are likely operating free of U.S. sanctions.² Recent Administration statements raise new questions about this drastic drop-off:

- On February 5, 2026, nearly a year into negotiations, Secretary Bessent testified that the Administration wanted to keep waiting to "see where the peace talks go" before resuming certain Russia counter-evasion sanctions³—even as it appears the Administration has repeatedly sanctioned Iran and Cuba during talks with those countries.
- On May 22, 2026, when asked if Russia negotiations had stalled, Secretary Rubio said: "They were not fruitful, unfortunately... there are no such talks occurring at this time."⁴

In light of these statements, we request that the Administration respond to the following question no later than August 28, 2026: If the Administration paused regular Russia sanctions because of peace talks, and those talks stalled months ago, why hasn't the Administration resumed routine and frequent U.S. sanctions to rebuild leverage for a just peace in Ukraine?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

¹ Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Minority Staff, and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Minority Staff, “Dropping the Baton: How America is Failing to Use Russia Sanctions and Export Controls to Help Achieve a Just Peace in Ukraine,” August 2025, p. 4, https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/final_dropping_the_baton_-_how_america_is_failing_to_use_russia_sanctions_and_export_controls_to_help_achieve_a_just_peace_in_ukraine_-_august_2025.pdf. Note that the report lists 70 sanctions rollouts by the Treasury Department and 41 by the State Department, for a total of 111 cited above; the total is 141 rollouts if sets of export control actions by the Commerce Department are included.

² Estimate based on prior trend. *Id.*, p. 4.

³ Reuters, “Treasury’s Bessent says further Russian sanctions depend on peace talks,” David Lawder and Andrea Shalal, February 5, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/treasurys-bessent-says-further-russian-sanctions-depend-peace-talks-2026-02-05/>.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Secretary of State Marco Rubio Remarks to Press,” May 22, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/05/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-remarks-to-press-10>.