

We have seen the horrific ethnic cleanings against the Rohingya in Burma. We have seen the atrocities committed by Assad against his own people in Syria. But bringing the criminals behind these massacres to justice can be difficult. That is why 35 years ago, we enacted the State Department's Rewards program. It authorizes the Secretary of State to offer rewards for the arrest or conviction of some of the most dangerous people in the world.

Originally written to be used against international terrorists, the successful program has since been expanded to include drug traffickers, war criminals, and perpetrators of genocide. As the world changes and as the international criminals evolve, we need to make sure this important program evolves with them. And that is why I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting the War Crimes Rewards Expansion Act.

Mr. Speaker, the bill makes clear that these rewards are not just meant to support international tribunals. They can also be used to bring these dangerous criminals to justice here in the United States, under United States law.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the author of this bill, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), and my good friend, Chairman ENGEL, for considering this bill today, which deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I echo the words of Mr. McCaul. I am pleased to support this legislation, and I urge all Members to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1819.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT YEVGENIY PRIGOZHIN AND HIS AFFILIATED ENTITIES POSE A THREAT TO INTERESTS AND SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 996) expressing the sense of Congress that the activities of Russian national Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities pose a threat to the national interests and security of the United States and of its allies and partners, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 996

Whereas Yevgeniy Prigozhin is a Russian national who has maintained close personal ties with President Vladimir Putin since the early 2000s;

Whereas Yevgeniy Prigozhin is the patron and founder of the Wagner Group, also known as the Private Military Company (PMC) Wagner, a Russian mercenary organization staffed by current and former military and intelligence officers, and the Internet Research Agency (IRA), an organization engaged in online influence operations;

Whereas the IRA has conducted online information operations against the United States in an attempt to sow division and discord among the American electorate, as well as the electorates of our European allies and partners;

Whereas entities funded by Yevgeniy Prigozhin have been used by the Government of the Russian Federation to conduct military action, subversive operations, and disinformation campaigns on its behalf while giving it an appearance of plausible deniability;

Whereas the Wagner Group was involved in the Russian Federation's military invasion and attempted annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in February and March 2014, and in the subsequent insurrections in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk;

Whereas the Wagner Group has been providing military support to the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria since 2015, fighting alongside its forces and helping it recapture significant parts of the country;

Whereas, on February 7, 2018, the Wagner Group led an armed assault on United States troops near the city of Deir al-Zour in eastern Syria, prompting a United States counterattack, in what has been described as "the deadliest U.S.-Russia clash since the Cold War";

Whereas the Wagner Group has supported Khalifa Haftar and his "Libyan National Army" by providing mercenaries, artillery, tanks, drones, and ammunition, with Yevgeniy Prigozhin personally attending a meeting between Haftar and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in Moscow on November 7, 2018;

Whereas a United Nations report made public on May 6, 2020, concluded that the Wagner Group has operated up to 1,200 military contractors in Libya, including snipers and specialized military teams, serving as "an effective force multiplier" for Haftar's army.

Whereas mercenaries from the Wagner Group were deployed to Venezuela in January 2019 to provide support for the regime of Nicolas Maduro in the face of popular protests against his dictatorship;

Whereas Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities have spearheaded operations with the intent to influence political processes in Africa on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation in several countries, including Madagascar, South Africa, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and the Central African Republic;

Whereas the Wagner Group has deployed mercenaries to the Central African Republic since 2018 and has provided security detail for Central African Republic President Faustin-Archange Touadera, including Russian national Valery Zakharov, a former security official with close ties to the Wagner Group, who serves as the National Security Adviser;

Whereas, on July 31, 2018, Russian journalists Orkhan Dzhemal, Kirill Radchenko, and Alexander Rastorguyev were murdered in the Central African Republic while working on a documentary about the activities of the Wagner Group in that country;

Whereas according to an investigation by the London-based Dossier Center, the journalists had been tracked by officers of the Central African Republic gendarmerie who were in close communication with Russian nationals tied to the Wagner Group, including Valery Zakharov and Alexander Sotov;

Whereas associates of Yevgeniy Prigozhin were reported to discuss plans to set up camps "for combat prep and training in sabotage" with the goal of stoking racial violence and carrying out domestic terror attacks in the United States in the run-up to the November 3, 2020, presidential election;

Whereas associates of Yevgeniy Prigozhin have set up online influence operations based in Ghana and Nigeria to target social media audiences in the United States with the goal of inflaming racial tensions and provoking social unrest in the run-up to the November 3, 2020, presidential election;

Whereas, on December 20, 2016, the Department of the Treasury designated Yevgeniy Prigozhin under Executive Order 13661, "Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine", for having "materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, senior officials of the Russian Federation";

Whereas, on June 20, 2017, the Department of the Treasury designated the Wagner Group under Executive Order 13660, "Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine", for being "responsible for or complicit in, or having engaged in, directly or indirectly, actions or policies that threaten the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine";

Whereas, on March 15, 2018, the Department of the Treasury designated Yevgeniy Prigozhin, his affiliated entities, including the Internet Research Agency, and his subordinates under Executive Order 13694, "Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities," for being "involved in interfering with [U.S.] election processes or institutions";

Whereas on July 15, 2020, under Executive Orders 13848, 13694 (as amended), and 13661, the Department of the Treasury designated entities located in Sudan, Hong Kong, and Thailand that have enabled Yevgeniy Prigozhin's ability to evade United States sanctions as well as Prigozhin-linked entities that have attempted to suppress and discredit protestors seeking reforms in Sudan;

Whereas, on September 23, 2020, pursuant to Executive Orders 13848, 13694 (as amended), and 13661, the Department of the Treasury designated a network of entities and individuals working on behalf of Yevgeniy Prigozhin seeking to advance Russia's influence in the Central African Republic;

Whereas, on October 15, 2020, the European Union sanctioned Yevgeniy Prigozhin for engaging in "and providing support for Wagner Group's activities in Libya, which threaten the country's peace, stability and security"; and

Whereas current and former Administration officials have affirmed that the malign activities of Yevgeniy Prigozhin around the world pose a significant threat to United States national security interests: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns any and all attempts by the Government of the Russian Federation and associated actors to influence the domestic politics of other countries and sow division among their peoples, particularly the United States and its allies and partners;

(2) condemns the activities of Russian national Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities that pose a threat to the democratic values, democratic institutions, and security of the United States and its allies and partners;

(3) urges countries and entities engaging with Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities in business or advisory capacities to cease these engagements;

(4) supports the additional designations made by the Department of the Treasury on September 23, 2020, and by the European Union on October 15, 2020, and calls on the United States Government and the European Union to continue to target the ability of Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities to conduct operations globally and to interfere in the democratic processes of the United States and its allies and partners; and

(5) calls for close coordination between the United States Government and the governments of United States allies and partners to ensure that sanctions regimes against Yevgeniy Prigozhin and his affiliated entities are enforced and coordinated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCaul) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

□ 1615

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 996.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for joining me to introduce this measure condemning one of the principal architects of Russian aggression around the world. Yevgeniy Prigozhin is one of Vladimir Putin's key cronies, with a long history of working against American interests on behalf of the Russian Government. His Internet Research Agency disinformation campaigns have worked to sow division and undermine democratic elections right here at home and also among our allies.

Yevgeniy Prigozhin is also the leader of the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary organization, that has spread deadly conflict across the globe, engaging in violent and subversive operations in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, and sub-Saharan Africa. He has directed human rights violations in Syria, undermined U.S. operations in the Middle East, and played a key role in invading and destabilizing Ukraine.

We must hold Prigozhin accountable and take action to stop his nefarious activities. This resolution condemns Prigozhin and his Kremlin partners, expresses strong support for the U.S. and European Union sanctions on him, which were announced this fall, and

calls for the imposition of additional targeted sanctions.

As Putin and his henchmen, like Prigozhin, continue their attacks on democracies across the world, Congress must send a strong, unified message that we will not tolerate their destabilizing actions and that we are ready to hold them accountable. Passing this resolution does just that.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this measure, urge all my colleagues to do the same, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCaul. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, Yevgeniy Prigozhin is one of the most destructive operators within Vladimir Putin's corrupt regime. The destabilizing activity that he has directed and financed can be felt throughout the world.

Mr. Prigozhin bankrolls the Russian Wagner Group, whose mercenaries have fanned the deadly flames of conflicts, propped up dictatorships, committed gruesome human rights abuses, all at the Kremlin's direction.

In Ukraine, the Wagner Group supported Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the pro-Russian separatists in the country's east. They have provided military support to the murderous Bashar al-Assad regime, and they even led an assault against U.S. troops in Syria in 2018.

In Libya, Russia has jeopardized efforts to bring peace to the country by supporting Haftar, as well as by sending advanced Russian aircraft and thousands of mercenaries from the Wagner Group into the country.

The Wagner Group is also actively meddling in the domestic politics of numerous African countries. There, they hope to expand Russian influence on the continent while also exploiting Africa's natural resources for their own profit.

The United States is not immune from the threat posed by the Wagner Group. Mr. Prigozhin financed the Internet Research Agency, a Russian troll farm that has attempted to interfere in the United States elections and sow discord among the American people.

Let me be clear. Mr. Prigozhin is a direct threat to the United States. We cannot allow this behavior to go unchecked. The United States has responded forcefully, sanctioning him, the Wagner Group, the Internet Research Agency, and many more of Mr. Prigozhin's front companies and affiliates.

In October, I was glad to see the EU join the United States in sanctioning Mr. Prigozhin as well.

However, we must keep up the pressure. That is why I support the resolution before us today. It condemns Mr. Prigozhin's corrupt activity, and it sends a direct message to the Kremlin that the United States Congress will continue to hold Mr. Prigozhin accountable for his efforts to further the Putin regime's malign agenda. It also

exposes the truth about the Kremlin's ridiculous claim that Mr. Prigozhin and the Wagner Group operate independently.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this resolution's passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume for the purpose of closing.

Mr. Speaker, Yevgeniy Prigozhin is an enemy of democracy and an adversary of the U.S. and our allies.

From sowing discord and division through disinformation campaigns to stoking violent conflicts around the world, Prigozhin is a dangerous Putin crony.

This bipartisan measure condemns Prigozhin's nefarious activities and demonstrates Congress' support for continued cooperation between the United States and our European allies to hold him and his Kremlin partners accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting its passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 996, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING POLITICALLY MOTIVATED IMPRISONMENT AND CALLING FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 958) condemning the practice of politically motivated imprisonment and calling for the immediate release of political prisoners in the Russian Federation and urging action by the United States Government to impose sanctions with respect to persons responsible for that form of human rights abuse, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 958

Whereas the right to liberty and security of a person and the protection from arbitrary imprisonment are among the principal human rights guaranteed by Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23 of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights;

Whereas the Russian Federation, as member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, is bound by international commitments with regard to human rights and the rule of law;