



Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

RUSSIA NEWS | NOVEMBER 9, 2011, 5:53 P.M. ET

Senators Push to Keep 2 Russian Generals Out of U.S.

By ALAN CULLISON

U.S. lawmakers are moving to block the planned visit to the U.S. of two Russian generals who they say helped cover up the murder of a Russian whistleblower in prison three years ago.

Their appeal in a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ratchets up pressure on the Obama administration, which is defending a "reset" in relations with Moscow as a major foreign-policy accomplishment. Some in Congress have been calling for a tougher line toward Moscow.

The case of the dead whistleblower, Sergei Magnitsky, has been a source of friction in Russia-U.S. relations, and the Kremlin has bristled at a visa ban that the U.S. implemented on Russian officials linked to Mr. Magnitsky's imprisonment and death.

Moscow this summer retaliated with its own blacklist of U.S. officials, in what one Russian official derisively called "the war of the lists." So far, neither side has actually barred an official who has tried to visit Washington or Moscow.

U.S. Sens. Roger Wicker (R., Miss.) and Benjamin Cardin (D., Md.) urged Mrs. Clinton in a letter on Monday to "immediately review any possible visa applications" submitted by two Russian Interior Ministry generals who are scheduled to enter the U.S. around Nov. 15.

The State Department declined to comment on the letter, saying that it is against policy to talk about individual visa cases. But Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner said the State Department can legally deny visas to anyone involved in serious human-rights violations. "If any individual involved in the wrongful death of Sergei Magnitsky applies for a U.S. visa, the relevant provisions of law will be applied," he said.

The officials had been invited to Washington to discuss intellectual-property rights with counterparts at the Justice Department and attend a round-table at the U.S.-Russia Business Council in Washington.

Organizers of the conference in Washington said they had checked Russian attendees of the conference against a State Department list of officials allegedly involved in the Magnitsky case. Tom Thomson, executive director of the the Coalition for Intellectual Property Rights, which invited the generals, said "we had no indication that any of these officials were involved in the Magnitsky matter."

The senators wrote that the generals "are involved in the cynical and sweeping coverup and the torture and murder" of Mr. Magnitsky, who was jailed in 2008 after trying to report a fraud that netted an estimated \$230 million in bogus tax refunds for Russian officials.

Russia's Interior Ministry declined to comment on the matter.

The senators called the planned visit of the Russian officials "a bitter irony, given the proximity to the second anniversary of Magnitsky's death on November 16."

Russian officials say Mr. Magnitsky received inadequate medical care during his 11 months in prison in squalid conditions. A government-appointed human-rights panel said he may have died after a beating.

The Obama administration has been at odds with Congress over how harshly it should respond to the Magnitsky

case. A bill sponsored by 23 senators would deny American entry to Russian officials implicated in his death or the criminal case against him. The proposed law would also freeze their U.S.-held assets.

The proposal comes as Washington has been trying to improve trade ties with Moscow, pressing for Russia's admission to the World Trade Organization, and arguing for the abrogation of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, a 1974 federal law that prevents permanent normal trade relations with Moscow and would disrupt WTO benefits.

Mr. Wicker said Russia's handling of the Magnitsky case set a bad precedent. "When there's such a blatant disregard for the rule of law, it raises questions as to our ability to count on them when it comes to abiding by trade agreements and obligations under the WTO," Mr. Wicker said in an interview. "If Russia's going to continue to be scofflaw, to me it raises questions as to whether they belong in the WTO."

The White House has argued the Magnitsky bill could jeopardize hard-won Russian cooperation on issues such as Iran and Afghanistan. The State Department said a law isn't needed because it has already compiled a list of dozens of Russian officials that it quietly barred from the country for their involvement in the Magnitsky case.

But the State Department is under pressure to expand the list. William Browder, whose Hermitage Capital investment fund employed Mr. Magnitsky in Russia, said his company's investigation into the affair had last year identified 60 Russian officials who were somehow implicated in Mr. Magnitsky's death and imprisonment.

"If we were to do a revised list now, I estimate it would be three times as long, and would have 180 people, not 60," Mr. Browder said. Additions to the list include officials who have been involved in a cover-up of Mr. Magnitsky's death, he said.

Mr. Browder said the two Russian officials, Gen. Maj. Tatiana Gerasimova and Gen. Maj. Nikolai Shelepanov, were recent additions to his list, because they played key roles in clearing guilty officers and pinning phony criminal charges on Mr. Magnitsky.

Gen. Gerasimova twice signed declarations dismissing all Interior Ministry officials of any wrongdoing, most recently in July. Gen. Shelepanov, Mr. Browder said, was in charge of overseeing Mr. Magnitsky's arrest and confinement, and recently signed an order extending a posthumous criminal investigation of Mr. Magnitsky.

—William Maudlin contributed to this article.

Write to Alan Cullison at alan.cullison@wsj.com

Copyright 2011 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com