

Russian Propaganda Machine Attacks U.S. Oil Industry

A recent U.S. intelligence report re-confirmed several other studies that the Russian government has an ongoing program to limit oil and natural gas production in the U.S.

Those findings are documented in an analysis released Jan. 6 by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which includes information from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency (NSA).

The focus of the report centered on the presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The report discloses the use of cyber tools and media campaigns to influence public opinion and undermine public faith in the U.S.

"We assess with high confidence that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election, the consistent goals of which were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency," the report stated.

Even though the report centered on the election, it also stated that the Russian government has been trying to undermine the oil and gas industry, too.

The report stated the Russian propaganda highlighted U.S. environmental issues involved in the debate on hydraulic fracturing and infrastructure development, such as pipelines.

"This is likely reflective of the Russian Government's concern about the impact of fracking and U.S. natural gas production on the global energy market and the potential challenges to Gazprom's profitability," the report stated. Gazprom is an oil and gas company owned by the Russian government, and it is a monopoly.

Russia is a major exporter of crude oil and natural gas. It relies heavily on revenues from oil and gas exports. Increased production in the U.S. has increased competition for oil and gas internationally. It has affected the price of both commodities.

If Russia could create a movement against hydraulic fracturing, it might have a negative impact on U.S. production, which would reduce some competition and possibly increase price.

Russia's government-funded international media outlet, RT, "the Kremlin's principal international propaganda outlet," has attacked the environmental integrity of hydraulic fracturing in a report that interviewed environmental activists in the U.S. and abroad in an effort to build public opposition and government bans on hydraulic fracturing.

Newsweek published on Jan. 29 a story by Drew Johnson, senior fellow at the Taxpayers Protection Alliance, which stated in 2014, intelligence information led then-NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen to conclude that Moscow conspired with environmental groups to block fracking activities in Romania, Lithuania and Bulgaria. "Russia, as part of their sophisticated information and disinformation operations, engaged actively with so-called non-governmental organizations -- environmental

organizations working against shale gas -- to maintain dependence on imported Russian gas," said Rasmussen.

Johnson reported that a U.S. Senate report found the Sea Change Foundation funneled more than \$43 million to environmental causes in 2011. He said the Foundation is heavily funded by a Bermuda-based shell corporation with direct ties to Putin and Russian oil interests.

The revelation that Russia wants to limit oil and gas production and exports from the U.S. is not new. There have been numerous reports in recent years linking the Kremlin to propaganda campaigns and the funding of environmental groups, attempting to restrict energy development in the U.S.

However, the energy renaissance continues even after years of low commodity prices, massive layoffs, and attacks from environmental groups.

The battles continue. The legislative director of the Sierra Club, one of the many environmental groups dedicated to limiting oil and gas production, said: "We're preparing for the fight of our lives."

Yes, many people see this battle as a fight for their lives, but Russia does not have America's best interest at heart.



Alex Mills, President
Texas Alliance of Energy Producers
900 8th Street, Suite 400
Wichita Falls, Texas 76301
(940) 723-4131