

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2026

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

Secretary Bessent:

We write to demand the immediate reversal of the Treasury's decision to ease sanctions to allow Indian oil refiners to purchase Russian oil. Your recent decision to provide a 30-day waiver is dangerous, self-defeating, and indefensible. Recent news reporting has revealed that Russia currently provides Iran with intelligence to target and kill U.S. troops. This waiver constitutes an inexplicable act of material benefit to the enemy.¹

President Trump's decision to throw the U.S. into an unauthorized war culminated in a predictable outcome: the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and decreased oil production throughout the Middle East. Rather than performing the necessary contingency planning that would keep India and other allies supplied with alternative sources, the Administration's hapless approach has allowed Russia and other adversaries to profit from oil reserves previously constrained by sanctions, supporting Russian efforts to harm U.S. troops and thwart U.S. intelligence. Additionally, although the Trump administration is claiming the U.S. economy "will be able to weather any of the temporary impacts of Operation Epic Fury", American consumers are already paying the price for it at the pump.² Oil prices have increased over \$100 per barrel,³ and gas prices have soared 34 cents since the start of the war.⁴ A prolonged conflict with Iran and wider military operations throughout the Middle East will only deepen the energy cost-crisis, burdening Americans to pay more at the pump, and exacerbating the affordability crisis facing too many Americans.

The administration's decision to ease sanctions on Russian oil now allows our enemies to profit from an estimated 145 million barrels of previously blockaded oil.⁵ This waiver also undermines your own Bilateral Trade Agreement with India, under which India purportedly agreed to cease purchases of Russian oil in exchange for access to U.S. and Venezuelan supply.⁶ This waiver constitutes a reactive measure to cushion gas prices, unconnected with any cohesive strategy. It signals that the United States will renege on its commitments under economic pressure—and that its partners need not take those commitments seriously.

¹Noah Robertson, Ellen Nakashima, Warren P. Strobel, "Russia is providing Iran intelligence to target U.S. forces, officials say," Washington Post, March 6, 2026, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/06/russia-iran-intelligence-us-targets/>.

²Lindsay Ellis, "White House Focused on 'Keeping Prices Stable,' Leavitt Says," Wall Street Journal, March 4, 2026. <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/iran-us-israel-conflict-2026/card/white-house-focused-on-keeping-prices-stable-leavitt-says-AMwSXl5Er9ELRgOraN99>.

³Rebecca F. Elliot, Joe Rennison, "Oil Prices Surge Above \$100 a Barrel for the First Time in Almost Four Years," March 8, 2026. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/08/business/energy-environment/oil-prices-iran-100-dollars-barrel.html>.

⁴Emmett Lindner, "U.S. Gas Prices, Up 11% in a Week, Pile Pressure on Trump," The New York Times, March 6, 2026. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/06/business/aaa-gas-prices.html>.

⁵Cherylann Mollan, "US eases sanctions on Russian oil sales to India during Iran conflict," BBC, March 6, 2026. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy031d1ny7jo>.

⁶Julia Manchester, "Trump says he's reached a trade deal with India after Modi commits not to buy Russian oil," The Hill, February 2, 2026. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5718788-india-agrees-buy-us-oil/>.

Even more troubling than the rise of oil prices is the lifeline the United States has given to Russia just as U.S. officials confirmed Russia is providing Iranian forces with the locations of American military assets, including warships and aircraft.⁷ By providing this waiver, you have signaled that the United States will reward attacks on our troops, not deter them.

The questions below address two distinct lines of accountability. The first concerns the specific waiver decision and its immediate consequences for sanctions integrity, energy markets, and troop safety. The second concerns the administration's planning failures prior to its unauthorized military action, and the absence of coordination with allies and partners, whose cooperation is essential to maintaining American sanctions architecture, which this waiver now undermines.

Given the urgent nature of the concerns we have raised, we respectfully request your response to the following questions by Friday, March 13:

1. Do you plan to continue offering waivers or loosening of Russian sanctions under Russian Harmful Foreign Activities Sanctions Regulations, 31 CFR part 587, or the Ukraine-/Russia-Related Sanctions Regulations, 31 CFR part 589, if the Strait of Hormuz remains closed?
2. Given the supply disruption caused by the closure of or limited movement through the Strait, what is the Treasury Department doing to prevent Russian oil from filling the gap in global supply?
3. What knowledge did the Treasury Department have, prior to issuing the waiver, of Russian intelligence-sharing with Iran—and did that knowledge factor into the waiver decision?
4. Did Treasury consult with the Department of Defense, the State Department or the Intelligence Community regarding Russian intelligence-sharing with Iran before issuing this waiver? If so, what was the outcome of that consultation?
5. What conditions, if any, must be met for this waiver to be revoked? Is there a defined threshold—military, intelligence, or diplomatic—that would trigger its termination?
6. How does this waiver comport with the terms of the U.S.-India Bilateral Trade Agreement, and has India been formally notified that this waiver does not modify its existing obligations on Russian oil purchases?
7. Has Treasury assessed the revenue impact—specifically, how much additional income Russia will derive from this waiver during the 30-day period? If so, will that assessment be shared with Congress?
8. Prior to authorizing military action against Iran, did Treasury conduct a sanctions contingency analysis examining the economic consequences of Strait of Hormuz closure or significant Middle East supply disruption? If so, will you provide that analysis to Congress?
9. What emergency oil price stabilization mechanisms did Treasury have in place before military operations commenced, and when were those mechanisms activated?

⁷ Noah Robertson, Ellen Nakashima and Warren P. Strobel, "Russia is providing Iran intelligence to target U.S. forces, officials say," Washington Post, March 6, 2026. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/06/russia-iran-intelligence-us-targets/>.

10. Did Treasury coordinate with the Strategic Petroleum Reserve release authority before or immediately after hostilities began? If not, why not?
11. Which allied governments were consulted before the waiver was issued, and did any object on the grounds that it undermines the collective sanctions architecture against Russia?
12. Has Treasury assessed whether this waiver creates a precedent that other countries will invoke, effectively eroding the sanctions regime built in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine?
13. What consultations did Treasury conduct with G7 finance ministers and the EU prior to the decision to strike Iran, regarding contingency plans for energy market disruption?
14. Did Treasury participate in any interagency planning process prior to the decision to strike Iran? If so, were energy market stability and sanctions integrity identified as risks, and what mitigation measures were adopted?

Sincerely,



Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator