



## Propping Up Oil Prices Is Now A Russian Video Game

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The Russian news website Rus2Web is spreading awareness about the country's reliance on high oil prices by making it into a retro video game.

The game explicitly states that current oil prices are too low to support Russia's government budget, economy and the strength of the Russian ruble. Any score below \$90 dollars a barrel is explicitly stated to be a disaster for the Russian government. A score of \$110 a barrel states "Too suspicious, it's a dream...It's time to wake up."

In the real world, Russia has historically been dependent on the sale of large amounts of oil to America and Europe. In 2013, crude oil exports accounted for 68 percent of total export revenues.

Historically low oil prices caused the Russian economy to contract by 3.7 percent in 2015. Russia's economy will continue shrinking even if oil prices recover to \$80 per barrel, according to the Energy Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The current price of a barrel of oil is hovering around \$30. The private intelligence firm Stratfor described sanctions and low oil prices as the "perfect economic storm."

Low prices are likely making Russian foreign policy both desperate and even more aggressive.

"Low oil prices are almost certainly involved in Russia's decision to get involved in Syria, since the impact of low prices combined with U.S. and E.U. sanctions is seriously hurting the Russian economy," Emma Ashford, an expert in oil politics at the libertarian Cato Institute, told The Daily Caller News Foundation. "Less oil revenue coming into petrostates means less ability to spend on things like arms or military modernization, so if low revenues persist for a long time, it could weaken those states."

Russian President Vladimir Putin's administration has indeed been active in supporting foreign actions. Russia has openly supported the Syrian regime's offensive by targeting Islamic and

American-backed forces like the Free Syrian Army. Additionally, Russia is ramping-up the propaganda in the continuing conflict between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists.