



US Spending More on 'Promoting Democracy' in Russia

The United States has stepped up its efforts to "promote democracy in Russia," the Russian Izvestiya newspaper reported, saying that a single nonprofit foundation received a hefty increase of over a million dollars for its grants distributed on projects in Russia.

May 13, 2015

In 2014, the National Endowment for Democracy, a US non-profit tasked with promoting democracy abroad, spent \$9.3 million on NGO projects in Russia, an increase of \$1.3 million since 2013, according to the media outlet.

The NED receives funding from an array of government and private sources. It is primarily funded by the US Congress through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), banned in Russia in 2012.

The NED also receives donations from large US corporations and individual sponsors, including former secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Condoleezza Rice for instance.

Nadia Diuk, critical of Russia's policy with regard to Ukraine, is at the head of the NED operations focusing on Russia. According to Izvestiya, Diuk's father, was a member of the notorious Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). It was fighting against Soviet forces on the side of Nazi Germany during World War II. In 1943, the UPA massacred as many as 100,000 Polish civilians in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia.

Formally, the NED seeks to "strengthen democratic institutions around the world through nongovernmental efforts." To that end it gave grants to nearly 100 NGOs in Russia in 2014 for

reducing corruption, providing civic education, promoting democratic ideas and values, NGO strengthening, promoting civic engagement, strengthening freedom information, etc.

However, the non-profit has been mired in a number of controversies since the 1980s for supporting dubious causes and giving money to "movements and politicians that fit into the United States' foreign-policy objectives, regardless of whether those who receive the money engage in undemocratic campaigns," Slate magazine said in 2004.

Incidentally, the organization was very active in Ukraine in 2004, the year of the infamous presidential election that brought Viktor Yushchenko to power in the third round of voting, despite Viktor Yanukovich winning the second and supposedly final round.

Not surprisingly then, the Cato Institute once called the National Endowment for Democracy a "foreign policy loose cannon."

"Promoting democracy is a nebulous objective that can be manipulated to justify any whim of the special-interest groups — the Republican and Democratic parties, organized labor, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce — that control most of NED's funds" the think tank said in 1991.

"The main form of operation of all organizations by means of funding they receive is to engage in propaganda and opposition activity," political analyst Segrei Markov told Izvestiya.

In 1991, Allen Weinstein, one of the NED founders, said, "A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA." Not the best advertisement, is it?