



Cato's Rahn: Russian Money Behind Opposition to Keystone XL

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The Russians have been directing money to American environmental organizations to help them in their efforts to stop the expansion of U.S. gas and oil production to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, said Richard Rahn, senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.

In a column in The Washington Times, Rahn outlines the case for why Russia has been interfering with U.S. lobbying, noting that it is the country with the biggest interest in stopping the expansion of the oil and gas industry in Europe and America.

"There have been allegations and suspicions that the Russians were also putting major money into American environmental organizations to assist them in their efforts to stop the expansion of U.S. gas and oil production, but not much hard evidence — until now," he wrote.

He said that researchers at the Environmental Policy Alliance have produced a well-documented report showing how Russian money has filtered from a dark company in Bermuda through environmental bundlers, including the Sea Change Foundation.

From there, the report says, the money moved into major U.S. environmental lobbying organizations, among them, the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the League of Conservation Voters.

"The White House said it will veto the [Keystone] pipeline bill, even though its construction can only have a positive jobs, safety and environmental impact [even according to the administration's own studies]," he wrote.

"So the real question is who benefits from a veto of the pipeline? Answer: the Marxist government of Venezuela and its Cuban, Iranian and Russian allies."

Rahn said that it should be noted that President Barack Obama in 2012 was overheard promising the Russian president that he would be "more flexible" following his re-election.

Rahn said that Obama's comments could be interpreted as a request for help getting re-elected, and alleges that the Russians followed up by facilitating the flow of money to Obama's environmental allies, which used it to undermine the Republicans.

"Don't expect investigators to find a check written on a Kremlin bank account to the Sierra Club — that is not how it is done. Before Russian FSB [formerly the KGB] defector Alexander Litvinenko was murdered, he testified that 'the FSB is being used by certain officials solely for their private purposes. It's being used for settling scores and carrying out private and criminal orders for payment,'" Rahn said.

He noted that John Podesta, a former aide to Obama, had been the head of the Center for American Progress when it accepted millions of dollars from the Sea Change Foundation — one of the organizations receiving Russian-directed monies.

Rahn also said that the Russians have been making claims to the Arctic oil and gas reserves, putting markers close to the Alaskan shore, with designs of potentially gaining control of Alaska, which used to be part of the Russian Empire.

"The above merely scratches the surface of what is now known about how the Russians help environmental groups and officials of the Obama administration undermine oil and gas exploration and development, economic growth and job creation in the United States," he wrote.

"There are many apparent violations of U.S. laws by the direct and indirect recipients of the Russian-guided monies. Several U.S. government agencies have the information but — surprise, surprise — the Holder Justice Department has failed to act and, reportedly impeded investigations into the matter."

He concluded by saying, "It is now time for the appropriate committees of Congress to exercise oversight and hold hearings."