
EU IS 'FOE', AS TRUMP SEEKS TO BEFRIEND PUTIN

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The EU is a "foe", while the US must "engage" with Russia, the US has said, as Donald Trump prepares to meet Vladimir Putin.

Trump, the US president, designated the EU as an enemy while talking about a trade war with Europe on the CBS broadcaster on Sunday (15 July).

"The European Union is a foe, what they do to us in trade. Now, you wouldn't think of the European Union, but they're a foe," he said.

"In a trade sense, they've really taken advantage of us, and many of those countries are in Nato and they weren't paying their bills," he added.

The US state department, the NBC network reported the same day, would also impose sanctions on any EU firms doing business with Iran.

"We will seek to provide unprecedented financial pressure on the Iranian regime," it said in a letter, after Trump walked away from an EU-brokered deal on Iran nuclear arms control.

"It's critical that the leaders of the US and Russia engage on important matters between our two countries," the department also said on Monday, after Trump landed in Helsinki for his tete-a-tete with the Russian chief.

"Congratulations to president Putin and Russia for putting on a truly great World Cup tournament - one of the best ever!," Trump added on twitter.

"He [Putin] has been very nice to me. We get along very well * Hopefully, someday, maybe he'll be a friend," Trump said last week in London.

That US messaging turned the world upside down for two of the EU's top officials.

"America and the EU are best friends. Whoever says we are foes is spreading fake news," EU Council head Donald Tusk said, using Trump's own pet slur against him.

"Calling your best friends foes only makes your real foes happy," European Commission vice president Frans Timmermans said.

His reference to Nato's "real foes" highlighted Russia's aggression against the Western alliance.

Putin invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 when they tried to align themselves with the

West.

Russia's military has harassed Nato allies in the Baltic region. Its hackers have also attacked US and EU elections, helping Trump to win office in 2016.

Meanwhile, the US refusal to exempt EU firms from Iran sanctions comes despite the fact Russia is to invest \$50bn in the Iranian energy sector.

Putin also sold Iran high-tech anti-aircraft systems, with no word from Trump.

The Helsinki summit falls just four days after Trump threatened to pull out of Nato, insulted Germany's Angela Merkel, and urged Britain's Theresa May to break off EU exit talks and "sue" the European Union instead.

The spectacle of Western infighting will make Putin look strong on Monday.

The best case scenario for the EU is that Trump and Putin agree nothing of substance, except, for instance, to revive a nuclear disarmament treaty.

The worst case is that Trump makes a deal over Europe's head, for instance, to recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, or to end sanctions, in return for warm words on better relations.

No matter what the outcome is, it will be a triumph for Putin on Russian TV, however.

The summit means Russia can look down on the US the way the Soviet Union used to, Igor Korotchenko, a Russian defence chief, told state TV ahead of Monday's meeting. "You came to us, because you need something," he said.

Trump is a "political neophyte" and Putin, a former spy chief, who is skilled in "studying the mind of targets, finding their vulnerabilities, and figuring out how to use them," will "educate" the US leader, other Russian media said.

"Trump is ours," one TV anchor joked, alluding to allegations that Putin had kompromat on Trump.

Even if no grand Russia-US bargain is announced today, that does not mean they did not make "secret verbal deals" when they meet, for a one-to-one, with just their interpreters present in the Finnish congress hall.

Kaynak/Source: