State of New Jersey
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MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

November 2, 2026

To the Port and Terminal Operators of New Jersey:

This letter serves to put ports and businesses on notice that purchasing or unloading the illegal Russian fuel currently bound for the east coast of the United States at the urging of the Trump Administration would likely subject businesses and individuals to harsh penalties, both civil and criminal.

The Trump Administration's authorization of Russian fuel imports directly conflicts with federal law. Specifically, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Congress in April 2022 enacted the Ending Importation of Russian Oil Act (Russian Oil Act), which provides: "All products of the Russian Federation classified under chapter 27 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States shall be banned from importation into the United States, in a manner consistent with any implementation actions issued under Executive Order 14066." Public L. 117-109 § 2. Chapter 27 of the Harmonized Tarriff Schedule, in turn, applies to diesel oil. *See* Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States Revision 21 (2026) at 8.

On October 9, 2026, the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) of the United States Treasury issued General License No. 135, which purports to authorize transactions prohibited by certain federal regulations "that are related to the sale, delivery, offloading, or importation, including importation into the United States, of diesel fuel of Russian Federation." Russia has since dispatched multiple diesel oil tankers to the United States, including at least one that may be headed for the New Jersey coast.

The Russian Oil Act does not grant the President or Treasury Department blanket authority to waive these sanctions through licenses. Rather it provides a single avenue by which its prohibitions may be lifted short of repeal: the President must certify that, among other things, Russia has agreed to withdraw its forces from Ukraine. *See* Public L. 117-109 § 3. Of course, no such certification has been made—or could be made—thus far.

Further, even if the Russian Oil Act could be circumvented through an executive branch license, because General License No. 135 is "a licensing action that significantly alters United States' foreign policy with regard to the Russian Federation," it can take effect only upon completion of a congressional review process that has not even been initiated, let alone completed. 22 U.S.C. § 9511(a)(2)(A)(iii).

These actions are illegal, in part, because Valdimir Putin continues to engage in an illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. *See* United Nations Charter, Ch. 1, Art. 2, Par. 4. Further, the U.S. is currently engaged in hostilities with Iran, whose military is responsible for the killing of 23 servicemembers and wounding dozens of others. In purchasing oil from Russia, a known supplier and financial supporter of Iran, Donald Trump is providing funding for a country that is engaged in hostilities with America, up to and including killing American soldiers.

The consequences of allowing any vessel that contains Russian fuel are significant. Under 19 U.S.C. § 1595a(b), any person who participates in an illegal importation "shall be liable to a penalty equal to the value of the article or articles introduced or attempted to be introduced." The applicable statute of limitations for a violation of this provision is five years. *See id.* § 1621. Thus, you could be subject to millions of dollars in penalties long after Trump has left office and his corrupt administration has come to an end.

Any effort to profit from the illegal trade in Russian fuel will be met with harsh penalties. I urge you to turn away any tanker that seeks to use your facilities in furtherance of such unlawful activity. New Jersey will look to use every available legal and regulatory tool to ensure that our ports, businesses, and infrastructure are not exploited to advance interests against those of the United States of America and New Jersey.

Sincerely,



Mikie Sherrill
Governor