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Graham Warns India, China Over Russian Oil Trade: Tariffs Could Be Imposed

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U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham has issued a stern warning to countries continuing to purchase discounted Russian oil, stating that such actions could provoke significant economic retaliation from the Trump administration. In particular, nations like India, China, and Brazil were singled out for potentially undermining efforts to end the war in Ukraine by sustaining energy trade with Moscow.

In an interview with *Fox News*, Senator Graham underscored the seriousness of the issue, stating, “If you keep buying cheap Russian oil to allow this war to continue, we will tariff the hell out of you.” Referring to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, Graham asserted that supporting Russian oil exports amounts to “blood money” and warned that the U.S. would be prepared to “crush your economy” through heavy tariffs. His remarks highlight a growing push in Congress to enforce secondary sanctions or punitive trade measures against countries seen as indirectly fueling the war.

The warning follows similar sentiments from President Donald Trump, who has backed steep tariffs against nations still trading with Russia in the energy sector. Speaking from the White House during a joint press appearance with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary General Mark Rutte, Trump stated the United States is considering 100 percent tariffs on nations buying Russian oil and gas unless a peace agreement is reached within 50 days. He sharply criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin, claiming, “He fooled Clinton, Bush, Obama, Biden – he didn’t fool me.” Trump emphasized that the tariffs are a pressure tactic, not an end in themselves, aiming to push Russia to the negotiating table.

Legislatively, this stance is being formalized through a bipartisan proposal co-sponsored by Senators Graham and Richard Blumenthal. The bill calls for tariffs of up to 500 percent on countries continuing to import Russian energy. In a joint statement, both senators accused these nations of indirectly financing Moscow’s war machine, arguing that continued trade undercuts U.S. and allied efforts to bring the conflict to a close.

India, one of the largest buyers of Russian oil since the war began, has defended its stance based on energy affordability and national interest. Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar confirmed that discussions had taken place with Senator Graham regarding the proposed legislation, underscoring the complexity of balancing global diplomatic ties with domestic energy needs.

As tensions escalate between the U.S. and countries maintaining economic links with Russia, it is becoming clear that energy trade is no longer just an economic issue; it is a geopolitical flashpoint. Graham’s and Trump’s positions represent a broader shift toward leveraging trade as a tool of foreign policy, especially when traditional diplomatic avenues fail to deliver results. Whether these threats materialize into actual tariffs will depend on the trajectory of the war and the international community’s willingness to align economically against Russia.