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Graham Targets Russian Oil Trade with Tariff Threat to India, China, and Brazil

July 22, 2025

— Categories: *Politics & Government*



U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham has issued a strong warning to India, China, and Brazil over their continued imports of Russian oil, backing a sweeping sanctions bill that could reshape global trade dynamics. The proposal, known as the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, has garnered bipartisan support in the Senate and includes provisions for up to 500 percent

tariffs on countries that persist in purchasing Russian energy without contributing to Ukraine's defense.

Graham, a senior Republican senator from South Carolina and longtime foreign policy hawk, described the bill as an "economic bunker buster" designed to undermine Russian President Vladimir Putin's war effort. He emphasized that the legislation is not merely symbolic but intended to impose real economic costs on those enabling Russia's energy trade. In televised interviews, he confirmed that President Donald Trump supports the measure and would retain authority to waive tariffs for nations offering substantial aid to Ukraine.

The sanctions bill, which Graham co-sponsored earlier this year, targets any country importing Russian oil, gas, petroleum products, or uranium. The senator framed the approach as necessary to exert economic pressure on Moscow while encouraging global allies to align more closely with Western policy objectives. He argued that decisive action is essential to achieving a negotiated settlement to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

The warning has drawn mixed reactions. Supporters argue that it signals the U.S. is prepared to use economic leverage to punish those undercutting Western sanctions. Critics, however, caution that such high tariffs could damage vital diplomatic relationships and destabilize global energy markets. Countries like India and China, which rely heavily on discounted Russian oil to support domestic energy demands, could respond with retaliatory trade policies, complicating U.S. efforts to maintain economic stability.

Russia has also pushed back, with Kremlin officials claiming the proposed sanctions would hinder peace negotiations and exacerbate international tensions. The policy's introduction comes at a time when global powers are attempting to manage both economic recovery and geopolitical risk.

Graham, alongside Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal, has positioned the bill as a bipartisan effort to enforce accountability and uphold the principles of sovereignty and international law. As the legislation advances, affected nations will need to decide whether to adjust their energy strategies or risk a significant disruption in trade with the United States. The outcome could influence both the trajectory of the war in Ukraine and the broader global balance of economic alliances.