



The US lobbied [Russia](#) this year on behalf of Visa and MasterCard in an attempt to ensure the payment companies were not "adversely affected" by new legislation, according to American diplomats in Moscow. A state department cable released this afternoon by WikiLeaks reveals that US diplomats intervened to try to amend a draft law going through Russia's Duma. Their explicit aim was to ensure the new law did not "disadvantage" the two US firms, the cable states.

The revelation comes a day after Visa – apparently acting under intense pressure from Washington – announced it was suspending all payments to WikiLeaks, the whistle-blowing website. Visa was following MasterCard, PayPal and Amazon, all of which have severed ties with the site and its founder Julian Assange in the last few days.

The companies have justified their decision to stop donations on the grounds that WikiLeaks is acting "illegally". Each has quickly become the target of sustained [online revenge attacks by disgruntled hackers](#), with [mastercard.com](#) paralysed today.

The cable, [dated 1 February 2010](#), states that the Obama administration took up the companies' plight with senior Russian government officials. Earlier this year Moscow unveiled plans to create a new National Payment Card System (NPCS) that would collect all credit card fees on domestic transactions – depriving Visa and MasterCard of a major chunk of revenue.

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