


# Russian Invasion Of Ukraine Could Trigger New Levels Of Corporate Activism



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*I cover crisis-related news, issues and topics.*

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TOPSHOT - Ukrainian military vehicles move past Independence square in central Kyiv on February 24, ... [+] AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

2-28-22 — *The story was updated with information about the steps taken by Microsoft.*

Corporate activism, which [ramped up](#) last year in response to environmental, social, public health and political issues, has started to address international affairs: Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Following the lead of [economic and other sanctions](#) by the U.S. and its allies last week, some major companies and organizations have already demonstrated their opposition to the invasion in different ways.

On Monday, [Reuters](#) reported that Microsoft ([MSFT.O](#)) said it would remove Russian state-owned media outlet RT's mobile apps from the Windows App store and ban advertisements on Russian state-sponsored media.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have blocked Russian state media from running ads and FedEx and UPS suspended shipments to and from Russia, according to [CBS News](#).

If other business leaders and their companies join in, their actions and words could create additional pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin and further isolate his country.

## BP

The [Washington Post](#) reported today that, “British oil giant BP said it is ‘exiting’ its \$14 billion stake in Russian oil giant Rosneft over Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine, in one of the biggest signs yet of the Western business world cutting ties over the Kremlin’s actions.

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“BP’s two representatives on Rosneft’s board, Bob Dudley and Bernard Looney, are also resigning, the company said.

“Russia’s attack on Ukraine is an act of aggression which is having tragic consequences across the region. BP has operated in Russia for over 30 years, working with brilliant Russian colleagues. However, this military action represents a fundamental change. It has led the bp board to conclude, after a thorough process, that our involvement with Rosneft, a state-owned enterprise, simply cannot continue,” BP chair Helge Lund said in a statement Sunday.

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## Richard Branson

Richard Branson called Putin "callous" and calculating. *Business Insider* reported that, “Virgin Group's founder has posted several tweets and a 592-word blog post since the start of the invasion. He's been heavily critical of Russia's president and calls for ‘the strongest of responses’ in full sanctions.”

## Delta Air Lines

[Delta Air Lines](#) cut their ties with Aeroflot, the Russian national airline. “We have removed our code from Aeroflot-operated services beyond Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport and removed Aeroflot's code from Delta-operated services from Los Angeles and New York-JFK, the company said. “Accommodations will be made for customers

affected by these changes,” Delta said in a statement, adding that it does not operate flights to Ukraine or Russia.

In response, Aeroflot announced today that it has suspended all of their flights until further notice, *CBS News* reported.

## U.S. Chamber Of Commerce

U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Suzanne P. Clark said in [a statement](#) that, “Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a serious breach of international law, a violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty, and an affront to our steadfast belief in a world where democratic countries, following the rule of law and the free enterprise system, can be free and prosper.

“The business community will continue to support the Administration, Congress, and our allies to ensure a swift and meaningful response to Russia’s aggression.”

## Encouraging Others

Some companies may need “encouragement” to act.

### Apple

*Market Watch* reported that, “The vice prime minister of Ukraine said Friday on Twitter that he has asked Apple Inc. Chief Executive Tim Cook to stop doing business with Russia and its citizens, including by cutting off that country’s access to the App Store.

“Mykhailo Fedorov, whose Twitter bio says he is also Ukraine’s minister of digital transformation, tweeted Friday from a verified account that he sent a letter imploring Cook to support Ukraine as it has been attacked by Russia, saying ‘in 2022, modern technology is perhaps the best answer to the tanks, multiple rocket launchers and missiles.’”

### Other Tech Companies

“In addition, Fedorov tweeted, and his office confirmed, he has sent similar letters to Meta Platforms [FB](#), Alphabet [GOOGL](#) [GOOG](#), Netflix [NFLX](#) and Twitter [TWTR](#).”

The longer the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues, the more likely it is that other corporations around the world could speak up or take action.

## Advice For Business Leaders

As I reported [in January](#), CEOs who are reluctant to be the public face of their organizations or engage in [corporate activism](#) should consider the results of a new poll that found people *want* top company executives to be visible and *expect* them to speak out on controversial issues and topics.

According to the [2022 Edelman Trust Barometer](#):

- 81% believe CEOs should be personally visible when discussing public policy with external stakeholders or the work their company has done to benefit society.
- 60% said that when considering a job, they expect the CEOs to speak out publicly about controversial social and political issues that the perspective employee cares about.

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