

Linux Drama 2024



**This is *PDF* and not
a Blog post, oh no!**

*I'm just too lazy to organize images, create directories for
a post, so yeah, here it is!*

Special for EVG.MOE



WTF is this PDF?

This document is an archive of news, quotes and comments that I scrapped across the internet about recent removal of Russian developers from Linux maintainers. I just copy-paste random quotes and posts from here and there.

How it's started

18 October 2024, Greg Kroah-Hartman committed a patch with the following message:

Remove some entries due to various compliance requirements. They can come back in the future if sufficient documentation is provided.

The patch changed the MAINTAINERS file, from which were removed a lot of developers which email address was in .ru zone. (one had gmail.com email - Serge Semin).

What does it mean

As I understood, these developers can not work on Linux kernel any more.

In this post¹ on medium, it's said:

under MAINTAINERS, you will find the list of maintainers and how to submit kernel changes.

These maintainers decide which patch goes to the mainline kernel. The maintainer for a specific driver or subsystem is usually listed in the file MAINTAINERS, which is also located in the root of the kernel source tree. There are special types of maintainer known as kernel maintainer. They manage the kernel tree.

Linus Torvalds' comments

First Linus message in the relying thread was:

Ok, lots of Russian trolls out and about. It's entirely clear why the change was done, it's not getting reverted, and using multiple random anonymous accounts to try to "grass root" it by Russian troll factories isn't going to change anything. And FYI for the actual innocent bystanders who aren't troll farm accounts - the "various compliance requirements" are not just a US thing. If you haven't heard of Russian sanctions yet, you should try to read the news some day. And by "news", I don't mean Russian state-sponsored spam. As to sending me a revert patch - please use whatever mush you call brains. I'm

1 <https://shashwotriral.medium.com/linux-kernel-development-model-b81caab14527>

*Finnish. Did you think I'd be *supporting* Russian aggression? Apparently it's not just lack of real news, it's lack of history knowledge too.*

When he was asked whether he is under any NDA, he answered:

No, but I'm not a lawyer, so I'm not going to go into the details that I - and other maintainers - were told by lawyers. I'm also not going to start discussing legal issues with random internet people who I seriously suspect are paid actors and/or have been riled up by them.

Serge Semin's comment

Serge Semin, one of the removed maintainers, wrote a message with a subject named **“linux: Goodbye from a Linux community volunteer”**. In this message, he describes what has been happened and that he won't continue his **volunteer** work on Linux kernel even if it was possible:

Thus even if it was still possible for me to send patches or perform some reviews, after what has been done my motivation to do that as a volunteer has simply vanished. (I might be doing a commercial upstreaming in future though). But before saying goodbye I'd like to express my gratitude to all the community members I have been lucky to work with during all these years.

Then he thanked a lot of people who he worked with some way, and expressed the hope that “we'll meet someday in more pleasant circumstances and drink a couple or more beers together”.

James Bottomley's response

James Bottomley, one of the Linux maintainers, replied to Serge's message:

Please accept all of our apologies for the way this was handled. A summary of the legal advice the kernel is operating under is

If your company is on the U.S. OFAC SDN lists, subject to an OFAC sanctions program, or owned/controlled by a company on the list, our ability to collaborate with you will be subject to restrictions, and you cannot be in the MAINTAINERS file.

Anyone who wishes to can query the list here:
<https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>

In your specific case, the problem is your employer is on that list. If there's been a mistake and your employer isn't on the list, that's the documentation

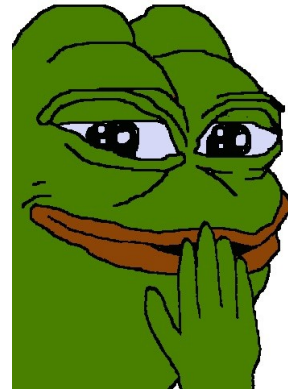
Greg is looking for. I would also like to thank you for all your past contributions and if you (or anyone else) would like an entry in the credit file, I'm happy to shepherd it for you if you send me what you'd like.

Again, we're really sorry it's come to this, but all of the Linux infrastructure and a lot of its maintainers are in the US and we can't ignore the requirements of US law. We are hoping that this action alone will be sufficient to satisfy the US Treasury department in charge of sanctions and we won't also have to remove any existing patches.

Regards, James Bottomley

Fun fact

A few persons in the mail list was referring to a Wikipedia article on historical topic as an argument.



Links

- <https://lore.kernel.org/all/2024101835-tiptop-blip-09ed@gregkh/> - Link to the thread in the Linux mailing list

History

- 2024-11-01 Initial version