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Medvedev Warns West Not to Meddle in FSB Bill

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President Dmitry Medvedev curtly warned foreign countries against meddling in Russia's domestic security issues Thursday, referring to a bill aimed at expanding the powers of the Federal Security Service.

"The law on the FSB is our domestic bill. Every country has a right to improve its legislation, including related to the special services," Medvedev snapped back when asked by a German reporter about his attitude toward the bill, which is expected to sail through a third and final reading in the State Duma on Friday.

Medvedev was speaking at a news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel after talks in Yekaterinburg.

The bill, submitted by the government last month, allows the FSB to summon and issue warnings to people whose actions it deems could lead to a terrorist or extremist crime. There are no concrete definitions for such actions in the bill.

The legislation passed in a second reading last week is a watered-down version of what was approved in a first reading, which allowed the imprisonment and fining of people who ignored FSB summons and warnings.

Critics fear that the bill could be used to further crack down on opposition protests and intimidate critical media outlets.

Medvedev said cryptically Thursday that what was going on in the Duma was decided on his direct orders. It was not clear whether he meant the initiation of the bill or the decision to weaken it.

A Kremlin spokeswoman could not clarify by telephone. "You'd better ask the president himself," she said.

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