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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Interior Troops Move Into Moscow After Protest Rally

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Columns of trucks carrying fresh Interior Troops rolled into Moscow on Tuesday, the day after a record protest rally ended in clashes with police.

Several bloggers reported seeing the trucks driving into central Moscow via major thoroughfares, including Yaroslavskoye Shosse, Leningradskoye Shosse and Shosse Entuziastov, Gazeta.ru reported.

Among the divisions spotted was the Dzerzhinsky division of the Interior Troops, which specializes in suppressing mass protests, Vesti.ru said.

An Interior Ministry spokesman said police had requested the soldiers, Interfax reported. A police spokesman said security is being stepped up Dec. 1 to 6 in connection with the State Duma vote last Sunday.

The troops' sole task is to ensure public safety, the Interior Ministry spokesman said.

A crowd of between 5,000 and 15,000 gathered on Chistoprudny Bulvar on Monday to protest the Duma elections results, which were fraught with numerous reports of violations.

The rally was authorized, but some protesters tried to stage an unsanctioned march afterwards, provoking a police crackdown in which some 300 were detained.

Among the arrested were whistleblower Alexei Navalny and rally organizer Ilya Yashin, both of whom remain in detention and face up to 15 days in jail. Both were due to appear in court Tuesday.

The victorious United Russia party said 10,000 of its supporters would stage a demonstration on Tuesday evening, but did not elaborate.

Opposition leaders said a nationwide protest is scheduled for Saturday. Scores of supporters of Navalny and Yashin gathered around the police precincts and courts where they were rumored to be Tuesday.

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