

Medvedev Tightens Rules For Rallies Near Kremlin

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President Dmitry Medvedev has added a spot outside the Kremlin to a list of places requiring presidential permission for public events — likely making it off-limits for any kind of opposition protest, RIA-Novosti reported Wednesday.

Vasilyevsky Spusk, the path leading down from St. Basil's Cathedral to the Moscow River where German aviator Mathias Rust famously landed a small plane in 1987, now joins Red Square and other areas within the Kremlin territory on the list of specially protected places.

For it to be used for a public event, organizers would now be required to secure the permission of the Kremlin, RIA-Novosti reported.

Vasilevsky Spusk had been used for public demonstrations during the 1980s and 1990s, but became primarily an area for concerts during Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's tenure.

It was unclear whether Medvedev's decision is connected to the recent wave of public protests in Moscow over the contested State Duma elections in December, but it would effectively

render the area off-limits.

Officials have allowed large-scale demonstrations numbering in the tens of thousands at Bolotnaya Ploshchad and Prospekt Akademika Sakharova — the largest gatherings of their kind in nearly two decades.

Opposition leaders have been planning a new rally for Feb. 4, although its location has not yet been set. Protest organizers have said they plan to march through the city to Manezh Square, located a stone's throw from the Kremlin.

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