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Russian NGO in U.S. Is Not a Kremlin Outfit

By The Moscow Times

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In response to "Looking for Foreign Agents in All the Wrong Places," a comment by Michael Bohm on July 13.

Editor,
The author's mention of The Institute for Democracy and Cooperation in New York seriously misrepresented our organization and its work.

First, our institute is expressly not a Kremlin organization. It is an independent, Russian nongovernmental organization registered in the United States. We represent our Russian mother organization and are funded by our Russian endowment. The Kremlin has no say either in our work or in our financing.

The institute is vastly different from organizations such as Golos, which the new NGO law in Russia addresses. Golos is a Russian organization working on U.S. money in Russia

to advance a U.S. government-supported objective.

We are similar in nature to the Carnegie Endowment, which is funded by an independent U.S. endowment and has a subdivision, the Carnegie Moscow Center, registered in Russia. This is our model, hence it is outside of the scope of U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Second, our NGO is not "politically active." We do not aim to interfere in or manipulate the political process in the United States. Ours is an academic and facilitator organization. We organize experience-exchange programs for Russian officials that come to the United States to learn about the U.S. experience in governance.

Our institute also holds academic conferences that are international in nature and participate in similar events held by other U.S. NGOs. But we never interfere in U.S. domestic politics, influence electoral results or exert public pressure on U.S. officials over human rights abuses.

Third, it is not our only mission to monitor human rights in the United States. As a part of our research, we do address human rights, but this is only one of our many areas.

Our official mission is to improve U.S.-Russian relations. We do this on several levels, such as meetings with organizations representing the Russian community and New York businesses interested in doing business in Russia, facilitating dialogue between academics and bringing the Russian point of view to the media.

We are not an undercover Kremlin mission posturing as an NGO. We are an NGO that works independently for the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations, but we are nonpolitical and nonpartisan.

Andranik Migranyan
Director
Institute for Democracy and Cooperation
New York

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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