

Deputy Prime Minister Suggests Sochi Hotel Rooms Are Being Watched

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Dmitry Kozak was in charge of preparations for the Games.

An attempt to defend Russia from a wave of reports about faulty infrastructure in Sochi by pointing the finger at guests backfired when a top official seemingly admitted to spying on hotel guests in their bathrooms.

"We have surveillance video from the hotels that shows people turn on the shower, direct the nozzle at the wall and then leave the room for the whole day," Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak said during a press conference on Thursday, seemingly unaware the statement would provoke more questions on how the footage was obtained in the first place.

When a reporter tried to ask a follow-up question, an aide led Kozak away, saying they were going to tour the Olympic media center, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Later on Thursday a spokesman for Kozak said that there is no surveillance in guests' hotel

rooms, but that video cameras had been used while construction and cleaning activities were ongoing, and that his boss must have been referring to footage obtained at that time.

The spokesman did not explain how, if that were true, the footage Kozak referred to could have featured guests.

In the run up to the Winter Olympics, which officially starts on Feb. 7, Western journalists in the Black Sea resort have reported a lack of running warm water, doorknobs, collapsing curtains and stray dogs among the problems they encountered upon arrival.

Kozak, who was in charge of preparations for the Games, said he had no "claims against Western or Russian journalists who are doing their jobs," but added the Olympic project had been a great success, considering the facilities were built on an "open field."

"We've put 100,000 guests in rooms and only got 103 registered complaints and every one of those is being taken care of," Kozak said.

"There are some imperfections, but victors don't have to justify themselves," he said in an interview with television channel Russia 24 on Thursday.

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