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Russia Turns to Reuters and Bloomberg As Clampdown on Media Gains Force

By The Moscow Times

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An entrance to the Reuters building in New York City.

Reuters and Bloomberg may soon have to register with the Russian government as "operators of critical infrastructure" on account of their widely used financial information systems, TASS reported Wednesday.

The requirements are part of a wider draft bill proposed by the Finance Ministry for the regulation of all companies that operate "critical" services in Russia, Deputy Finance Minister Alexei Moiseyev told TASS.

Calling the measures "mild," Moiseyev said Britain's Reuters and U.S.-based Bloomberg would likely have to register with the Central Bank and accept the "operator of critical infrastructure" label.

The bill does not entail any "restrictive regulation" and will not grant authorities access

to information on operations carried out via Bloomberg and Reuters' systems, he added.

The Russian government has this year shown a keen enthusiasm for ordering individuals and companies thought to wield a particular influence over the flow of information to register with state agencies.

Internet leaders Google, Facebook and Twitter were directed to register as "organizers of information distribution" earlier this month. As such, they will be required to hold information about Russian users on servers located inside the country.

Meanwhile, as of Aug. 1, any blog that receives more than 3,000 hits a day is also ordered to register as a "mass media outlet," a status that carries with it heightened scrutiny and legal obligations.

Last month, Russia's parliament also pushed through legislation limiting foreign ownership of domestic media to 20 percent. One of the legislation's authors, State Duma Deputy Vadim Dengin, said it aimed to curb foreign involvement in editorial policy.

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