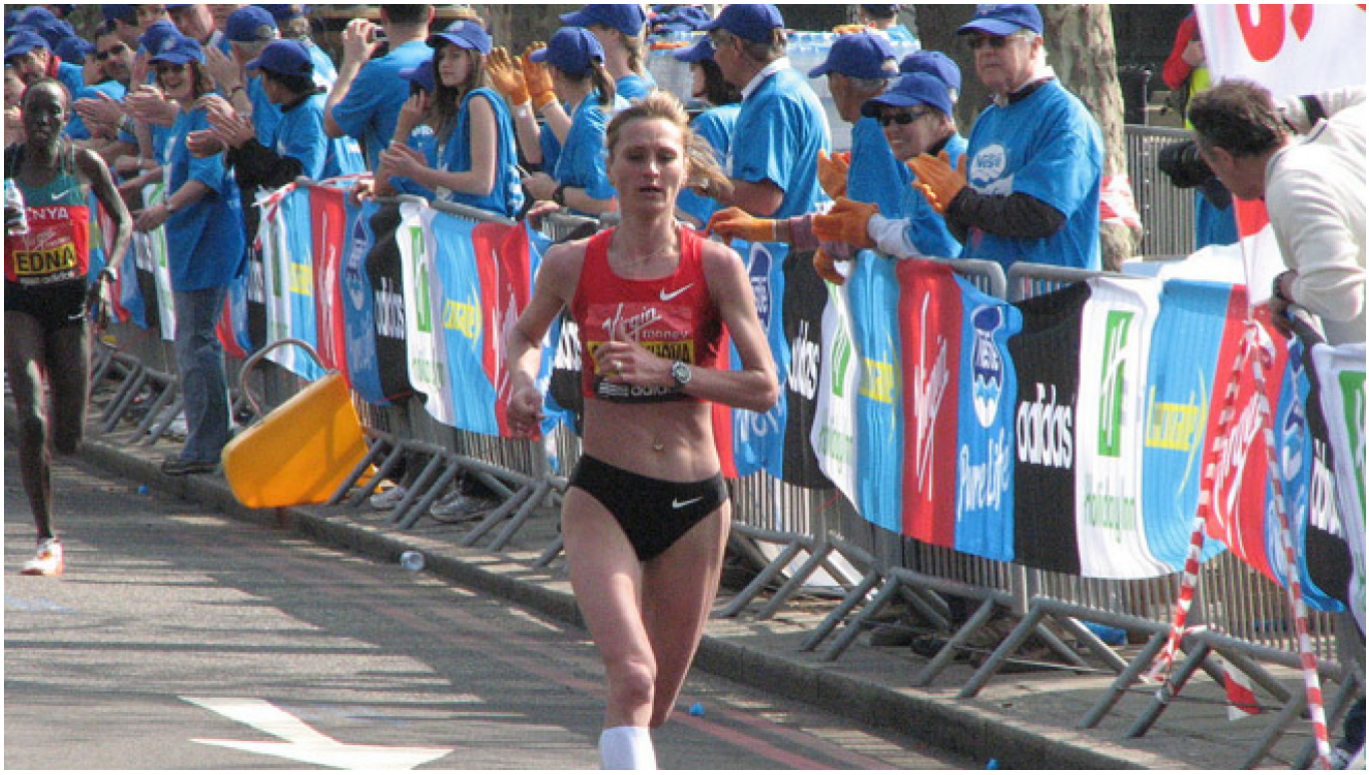
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Russian Athletics Federation Denies Allegations of Systematic Doping

By The Moscow Times

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The program alleged that Liliya Shobukhova, who won the Chicago Marathon from 2009-11 and the London race in 2010, paid the Russian Athletics Federation 450,000 euros to cover up a positive doping case.

A German TV documentary alleging widespread doping and cover-ups among Russian athletes contains "a pack of lies," Russia's Athletics Federation president told Reuters on Thursday.

"I can say that they are a pack of lies and it is an unfair account," Valentin Balakhnichev said. "I will be able to give a more accurate and fuller commentary later in the day once we have studied the situation further."

The hour-long program, broadcast by ARD on Wednesday, features an undercover video of what it says are Russian athletes and coaches admitting to covering up positive tests.

The video also alleges corruption and a systematic doping issue among Russian athletes and high-ranking officials.

The Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) said there was nothing to support the allegations.

"They do not have the facts or the documents to support any violations of the anti-doping principles," RUSADA managing director Nikita Kamayev said in an interview with R-Sport news agency.

"In terms of the television program, I have not seen it, as I do not understand German well enough. Therefore I am not able to comment on it.

Full Investigation

"In terms of the statement on WADA's website, RUSADA has not received an official request regarding this issue. We believe that the speculation and the statements are completely unfounded."

The Russian Athletics Federation was due to hold an emergency meeting later Thursday, the TASS news agency reported.

The World Anti-Doping Agency said in a statement that it would ensure any pertinent matters raised in the documentary would be "fully investigated."

"WADA has in fact already received some information and evidence of the type exposed in the documentary. All of that information has been passed to the appropriate independent body within the international federation, the IAAF. We will await the outcome of that independent body's deliberations.

"In so far as the particular allegations against Russian authorities and others are concerned, these will all be carefully scrutinized and if action is warranted, WADA will take any necessary and appropriate steps under the Code."

The global anti-doping watchdog's powers allow it to declare RUSADA non-compliant and withdraw the Moscow lab's accreditation to work in sports.

The IAAF said it was "not informed as to the status" of the investigation.

Doping Details

The program alleged that Liliya Shobukhova, who won the Chicago Marathon from 2009-11 and the London race in 2010, paid the Russian Athletics Federation 450,000 euros ($550,000) to cover up a positive doping case.

ARD also appeared to show reigning Olympic 800-meter champion Maria Savinova admitting to using the banned steroid oxandrolone in an undercover video that has the woman's face out of focus. The video was dubbed into German with the original audio track absent, but ARD said it possessed an unedited version.

The IAAF said there was "already an ongoing investigation by the IAAF Ethics Commission"

into Shobukhova's allegations.

The ARD report also linked doping to Russian officials and athletes in other sports, including swimming, cycling, biathlon, weightlifting and cross-country skiing.

The reports also include accusations from former Russian Anti-Doping Agency official Vitaly Stepanov and his wife Yulia, who previously competed as an 800-meter runner under the name Yulia Rusanova and was banned for doping.

Stepanov told ARD that various Russian sports federations "would come to [Russian] doping control officers" offering "extra cash" to hush up positive tests. He also accused the head of the national doping test laboratory, Grigory Rodchenkov, of falsifying tests and selling banned substances.

Yulia Stepanova accused coaches of providing her with banned substances.

"These are serious allegations. I understand an investigation is already under way by the IAAF ethics commission and we await the full findings," IOC spokesman Mark Adams told The Associated Press. "Should there be anything affecting the International Olympic Committee and our code of ethics we will not hesitate take any and all action necessary."

Yulia Stepanova also accused the head of the Russian federation's medical department, Sergei Portugalov, of supplying doping products in exchange for 5 percent of an athlete's earnings, plus bonuses for competition wins. She also said Russian athletes had avoided out-of-competition testing by using false names during foreign training camps.

The main organizations involved — the Russian Athletics Federation, RUSADA and the national doping test laboratory — are all funded and overseen by the Russian government.

"Of course it's shocking," World Anti-Doping Agency director general David Howman told ARD. "We've got to make sure ... that those who are suffering from fear are protected."
(Reuters, AP)

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