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CNN Set to Begin Broadcasting in Russia Again

By The Moscow Times

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CNN will receive the broadcast license in Russia.

Russia's state media watchdog has approved U.S. news giant CNN's application for a broadcast license, bringing the cable broadcaster back to Russia less than two months after it left the market following the introduction of a tough new media advertising law.

CNN will receive the broadcast license in the near future, state media watchdog Roskomnadzor press secretary, Vadim Ampelonsky, told news agency RBC on Thursday. A CNN representative contacted by the Moscow Times said that the news service had no comment at the time but that they have a "commitment to a long-term presence in Russia."

CNN in November announced that it would cease broadcasts in January, citing changes in Russia's media regulatory environment. A law forbidding advertisements on cable channels came into effect in January.

The bill's authors said that the measure was intended to help level competition between pay channels and free-to-watch broadcast channels — a move roundly criticized by cable channel executives, who pointed out that state channels dominate the airwaves.

In January the legislation was amended so that cable channels with 75 percent Russian content could still sell advertising. Shortly thereafter, CNN opened negotiations with Roskomnadzor to renew their broadcasting license.

CNN's exit from Russia was widely interpreted at the time as being connected with a law passed in October that requires Russian-registered media to have only 20 percent foreign ownership by 2017.

Bemoaning CNN's exit, former U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul wrote on his Twitter in November: "I remember the day when you could first watch CNN in the U.S.S.R. Now the clocks turn backward."

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