

Official: Russia Has Global Backing Against Doping Claims

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IAAF treasurer Valentin Balakhnichenov says Russia has received signals from international sports bodies that it could be cleared of allegations of systematic doping.

A documentary broadcast on German television in December accused Russia's athletics federation — then headed by Balakhnichenov — the sports ministry and anti-doping authorities of carrying out an organized doping program.

That documentary, based chiefly on testimony from former Russian anti-doping official Vitaly Stepanov and his wife Yulia, an athlete, led to investigations from the IAAF and the World Anti-Doping Agency, which are ongoing.

"The IAAF investigation isn't even finished yet, but colleagues in international organizations are supporting us, and they adhere to the opinion that there was no truth in the Stepanovs' statements," Balakhnichenov told the TASS news agency.

Balakhnichenov also criticized the whistleblower, Stepanov, for what he said was "anti-Russian

propaganda."

Balakhnichenkov voluntarily suspended himself from his duties as IAAF treasurer and council member for the duration of the investigation by its ethics commission.

The German documentary claimed he was linked to a payment made by a Russian marathon runner, Liliya Shobukhova, allegedly to cover up a positive doping test.

Balakhnichenkov stepped down last month as head of the Russian federation after 24 years in charge, following a separate doping scandal in which five Russian race-walkers, three of them Olympic champions, received bans.

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