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Russia Says 'Sure We Dope, But So Does Everyone Else'

By The Moscow Times

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“Russia's [doping] problems are no worse than other countries,” but “whatever we do, everything is bad,” Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said.

The Russian government considers the severe doping allegations leveled at their athletics program groundless and politicized, Russian media reported Monday.

An independent commission by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has recommended that the Russian athletics federation be declared "non-compliant" with anti-doping code, and be suspended from track and field competition, the report published Monday said.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) president Sebastien Coe asked that Russia respond to the 323-page report by the end of the week. The IAAF is considering a suspension that would ban Russian track and field athletes from international competition, including the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro.

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, a FIFA executive committee member and head of the committee organizing the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, insisted that Russia is being persecuted, Interfax news agency reported Monday.

"Russia's [doping] problems are no worse than other countries," but "whatever we do, everything is bad," Mutko said.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the accusations, "appear rather unfounded," Interfax reported.

Executive director of Russia's anti-doping agency (RUSADA) Nikita Kamaev said that the report was biased against Russia and "some of the issues have a particular acuteness and are, if you like, politicized," The Associated Press reported Monday.

Monday's WADA panel acknowledged that "Russia is not the only country, nor athletics the only sport, facing the problem of orchestrated doping."

The WADA commission investigated allegations of doping, cover-ups and extortion within both Russian athletics and the IAAF. Russia was found to have a "deeply rooted culture of cheating" that exploited athletes and involved coaches, doctors and laboratory personnel.

Russia has been running a "state-supported" doping program that "may be a residue of the old Soviet Union system, WADA commission leader and International Olympic Committee veteran Dick Pound said Monday.

Although no written document proves government involvement, "it would be naive in the extreme to conclude that activities on the scale discovered could have occurred without the explicit or tacit approval of the Russian authorities," Pound said, The Associated Press reported Monday.

The report accused the Russian government of "direct intimidation" over the Moscow doping lab, and "recommended that WADA withdraw its accreditation of the Moscow laboratory as soon as possible. The Moscow laboratory is unable to act independently."

The independent commission was investigating allegations made in a German television documentary about Russian athletes.

The WADA is also looking into possible bribery and extortion between senior IAAF officials and Russian athletes.

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