

# Russian Sports Minister Accepts Some Responsibility for Doping Scandal

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Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko has said that he shares responsibility for the doping scandal concerning Russian athletes and the banned substance meldonium, the Interfax news agency reported Friday.

In total eight Russian athletes have tested positive for the drug including Russian ice dancer Ekaterina Bobrova, speed-skater Pavel Kulizhnikov and tennis superstar Maria Sharapova.

“As head of the Sports Ministry, I bear its responsibility for Kulizhnikov and for Bobrova, I bear a collective responsibility ... We need to create a system that protects elite athletes from such things,” Mutko said at a Sports Ministry meeting, Interfax reported.

Mutko also said that meldonium can remain in an athlete’s system for longer than previously thought.

“The substance was prohibited on Jan. 1, but it was taken in December. Our doctors say it is possible that its residue can be preserved in muscle mass for longer than 100 days,” he said, the RBC news agency reported Friday.

The president of the Russian Skating Union Alexei Kravtsov said that the banned drug had been planted on skaters — five-time world champion and speed-skating world record holder Pavel Kulizhnikov, short-track speed-skating Olympic champion Semyon Elistratov and Russian national team short-track speed-skater Ekaterina Konstantinova — whose drug tests have also shown positive results.

They are among 60 international athletes who have tested positive for the substance.

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