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Kremlin Defends Embattled Sports Minister Mutko

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Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko is to keep his post despite a damning report proving state-backed doping in Russian sport, the Kremlin announced Tuesday.

Mutko will not be suspended from office because he is not directly mentioned in the report by the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

The WADA investigation revealed Monday that Russia's government, Federal Security Services (FSB) and Sports Ministry colluded to hide widespread doping across a large number of sports, including at the Sochi Winter Olympics.

WADA has subsequently called for all Russian athletes to be banned from competing at in this summer's Olympics Games in Rio de Janerio.

Head of the WADA commission, independent Canadian expert Richard McLaren, said in a press conference Monday it was "inconceivable" that Mutko was not aware of the doping

program.

Mutko is not named in the report, although his deputy Yury Nagornykh was identified as organizing the collection of clean urine samples to replace tainted samples at anti-doping laboratories.

Later on Tuesday Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced on Tuesday that Nagornykh had been suspended, the TASS news agency reported. Mutko also announced the suspension of four sports officials, including his anti-doping advisor Natalya Zhelanova.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has maintained following the report that all individuals directly implicated in doping should be suspended until investigations have been concluded.

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