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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia and the World Await Olympic Ban Decision

By Ola Cichowlas

July 19, 2016



The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has postponed its decision on whether Russia should be allowed to take part in next month's Olympic Games in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro. The committee convened after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) published a report on widespread state-sponsored doping in the Russian team during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

In a statement released on Tuesday evening, the IOC banned Russian officials whose names appeared in the report from traveling to the Rio Olympics. The IOC is exploring "legal options" for banning the entire Russian team from taking part in the Games, but cannot make such a decision until the Court of Arbitration of Sport, where Russian track and field athletes have contested their expulsion from the Olympics, announced its own ruling, the statement said.

Here's a video of Orla Chennaoui, a Sky News reporter, explaining why this "does not mean that it [the ban] may not still come."

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While Russia and the world awaited the IOC decision, the BBC's Moscow correspondent Steve Rosenberg reminded followers that the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games began exactly 26 years ago today.

Embed:

> July 19th 1980: Olympic joy in Moscow as the Moscow Games begin. July 19th 2016: Russia waits to hear if it'll be kicked out of Rio Games
>
> — Steve Rosenberg (@BBCSteveR) July 19, 2016

Athletes worldwide have been shocked by the findings of the report and many called for the IOC to follow WADA's recommendations to ban the entire Russian team from the Rio Olympics.

Here is what British long-distance runner and Olympic medalist Paula Radcliffe had to say:

Embed:

> State led deception and fraud on such a huge scale. IOC & CAS surely must act to protect clean athletes and sport. https://t.co/zPM2I848Er
>
> — Paula Radcliffe (@paulajradcliffe) July 18, 2016

Brian Moore, the former English rugby hooker turned BBC Sports pundit, also had some strong words.

Embed:

> If the IOC don't ban Russia I don't see how they have any credibility left.
>
> — Brian Moore (@brianmoore666) July 19, 2016

In its statement, the IOC said it won't organize or back any sports events or meetings in Russia. This is a serious potential problem, as Russia is set to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Earlier today, FIFA promised to take "appropriate steps" over the extensive doping cover up.

Following the report, WADA called on FIFA to investigate Russia's Sport Minister, Vitaly Mutko, who is also president of the Russian Football Union. WADA found that positive drug tests for 11 Russian football players had been covered up.

It has been a bad summer for Russian football. The performance of its football team in last month's UEFA Euro championships was poor — it even resulted in thousands of Russians signing a petition to fire the entire team.

Here's Rob Harris, an AP FIFA reporter, on how the doping scandal will increase the pressure on Russian football.

Embed:

> WADA report highlights how football doping was covered up in Russia - serious issue for FIFA with Confeds Cup 1 year away, World Cup in 2018
>
> — Rob Harris (@RobHarris) July 18, 2016

None of these scandals seem to have placed Mutko's ministerial position in danger, despite WADA's accusations of his leading role in the doping of Russian athletes.

The Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that Mutko would remain in his post and that "he did not appear as the direct executor of the actions that are suspected."

His statement contradicts the WADA report, which found that the Russian Sports Ministry — working with the Federal Security Service (FSB) — was directly involved in the doping of Russian athletes.

Here's Steve Rosenberg on Mutko:

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> Some call Putin the 'Teflon President' (Nothing sticks). So, is Mutko the 'Teflon Sports Minister'? So far he's survived the WADA report
>
> — Steve Rosenberg (@BBCSteveR) July 18, 2016

Instead, the Kremlin responded by "temporarily suspending" the members of Mutko's team whose names appeared in the report — insisting the minister himself had nothing to do with the doping.

Embed:

> "Absolutely unreal, and impossible" - Russia's Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko on accusations he ran doping cover-up. (h/t @rsportru).
>
> — James Ellingworth (@jellingworth) July 19, 2016

Last week, Putin blamed the West for the whole debacle: "If someone tries to politicize something in this area [sport], I think it's a big mistake."

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> Putin on Wada report: "We're seeing a dangerous return to politics interfering with sport" - Well, accusation is state-sponsored doping
>
> — tariq panja (@tariqpanja) July 18, 2016

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov toed the same line. In a telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Lavrov said that it was "necessary to prevent the politicization of sport."

The Russian media, meanwhile, was furious about the whole thing.

"The WADA commission was preparing the report under the supervision of a Canadian boss who described itself as 'independent'," Nikolai Dolgopolov wrote in an op-ed for state-owned Rossiyskaya Gazeta. "This is highly unlikely."

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