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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia to Criminalize Doping by 2017

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Russian lawmakers say they will introduce legislation by the end of the year that would criminalize doping in sports, the TASS news agency reported on Thursday.

The decision was reached during talks between Russia's Olympic Committee (ROC) and the head of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), Craig Reedie.

Russian sports have endured a turbulent summer, dominated by an ongoing doping scandal. Dozens of Russian athletes were banned from competing at this summer's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro on the basis of an independent WADA report detailing the widespread state-sponsored use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs across Russian sports.

The report, authored by Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren, also resulted in Russia's entire team being banned from the Paralympic Games, which began yesterday, on Sept. 7, and continue until Sept. 18.

ROC Honorary President Vitaly Smirnov, speaking at a press conference on Thursday, said doping should be a crime. "We have to introduce criminal liability for doping, especially for

young people. It is criminal," Smirnov said, adding that ROC chief Alexander Zhukov has committed to doing everything in his power to have the law approved by the end of the year.

Smirnov, who was named head of Russia's new independent anti-doping commission in July, also revealed that Russia's Sports Ministry had been warned about potential punishments for its doping practices prior to the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010.

"[Former IOC President] Jacques Rogge said the IOC knew about doping in Russia and [warned] there could be penalties," Sirmnov said, adding that "over six years we simply didn't devote enough attention to this warning."

"267 athletes were caught. We can't escape that fact," he said.

Smirnov also announced that the ROC has received a roadmap from the International Olympic Committee to combat doping. The roadmap also proposes coordination with WADA, and educational programs for young athletes.

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