The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Lying About U.S. Election Inspection Ban – State Department

October 25, 2016



Elise Amendola / AP

The United States federal government has not barred Russian election inspectors from observing the nation's upcoming presidential and local government contests on Nov. 8, according to a State Department statement received by The Moscow Times on Tuesday.

"Russian assertions that the U.S. government is barring them from observing the election are lies," the statement said.

Last week, the Russian tabloid Izvestia reported that Russian diplomats and observers were denied permission to inspect polling stations next month, citing unidentified sources in the Russian Central Election Commission.

Vladimir Churov, the former head of Russia's Central Electoral Commission, and who himself was implicated in the widespread electoral fraud that led to modern Russia's largest protests in 2011, complained that it was unjust for Russia not to take part.

But the U.S. says Russia was invited to join international monitoring missions, managed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Some 30 of the 57 countries in the OSCE are expected to observe the elections as part of the official mission.

“The Russian Federation was invited to join the OSCE delegation, both the long-term and short-term observer groups,” the State Department statement said, adding that Russian Embassy personnel in Washington were invited.

“Russia has chosen not to participate,” the statement said. “Russia was also invited to join the OSCE's parliamentary assembly observation mission. The Russians have not nominated anyone to participate." Russia's nomination deadline ended on Monday 24.

The election has drawn heightened interest in Russia, as state television has alleged the contest will be rigged in favor of Democratic candidate Hilary Clinton – who is perceived as an anti-Russian candidate in Moscow.

Russian inspectors were, however, denied requests to observe polling stations in Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana. But the State Department said characterizing this as a Washington-backed decision is wrong.

“If Russia applied to specific state or local officials, its up to those officials to best determine the appropriate response to Russia's request,” the statement said.

Justifying the rejection, Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schelder was quoted by CNN as saying the decision was based on recent flooding issues, which left his office understaffed to manage both flood relief and the elections.

"Had this flood event not occurred, we certainly would have been open to such a visit,” Schelder said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/10/25/russia-lying-about-us-election-inspection-ban-state-department-a55859