The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kremlin Threatens Ban on U.S. Election Monitors After Diplomatic 'Intimidation'

November 08, 2016



AP/Pavel Golovkin

The Kremlin has threatened to ban U.S. observers from Russian elections over claims that its diplomats were "intimidated" in the run-up to the U.S. presidential vote.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the U.S. embassy in Moscow had been given an official warning in the form of a diplomatic note, the RIA Novosti news site reported. As a result, Washington should not expect U.S. observers to receive accreditation for future elections unless part of an international mission, Ryabkov said.

The minister also claimed that the U.S. authorities had "intimidated Russian diplomats," using "every trick in the book to stop Russian representatives from assessing the elections."

Officials have already slammed the decision of some U.S. states to bar Russian election monitors from polling stations, calling this "unacceptable."

Authorities in Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana turned down the Kremlin's requests because international observers are banned from polling stations under the laws of all three states. However, Louisiana Secretary of State Tom Schedler stated that he would have welcomed the observers were it not for recent flooding that that had created additional challenges in organizing the voting.

The Kremlin had previously turned down the opportunity to join an election monitoring mission with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), instead applying to individual states.

U.S. State Department Spokesperson John Kirby claimed that the move was little more than a Kremlin publicity stunt.

"We told the Russian government that they were welcome to observe our elections," he said. "The fact that they have chosen to not join the OSCE observation mission makes clear that this issue is nothing more than a PR stunt."

More than 400 OSCE observers will be working across 33 U.S. states on Tuesday, when Americans take to the polls to elect a new president.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/11/08/kremlin-threatens-ban-on-us-election-monitors-after-diplomatic-intimidation-a56041