

United Russia Accuses U.S. Media of Meddling in 2016 Duma Elections

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The United Russia ruling party presented a report on Friday about U.S. media's alleged attempt to influence Russia's domestic affairs, including the 2016 State Duma elections.

According to Leonid Levin, chair of the State Duma's committee on information technologies who presented the report to lawmakers, there is a "large-scale system the U.S. [use] to influence domestic politics in Russia," and media outlets like Voice of America, Radio Svoboda and the CNN TV channel are part of it.

"During the parliamentary election campaign last year, radio stations funded from the U.S. state budget carried out propaganda and distorted the election process in Russia," Levin was quoted by the state-run TASS news agency as saying.

These media outlets, the lawmaker said, questioned the "democratic nature" of the election system in Russia, and talked about election results being predetermined.

“Only two percent of the articles [painted 2016 Duma elections] in a positive light. Forty-three percent were openly negative, and 55 percent were neutral,” Levin was quoted as saying. “Only two parties – [liberal] Yabloko and [the opposition party] PARNAS – were covered positively. Sources of information included mostly opposition politicians and experts who saw the election process negatively, which led to providing only one point of view.”

Commenting on the report, leader of the LDPR nationalist party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy suggested discussing the findings with Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Federal Security Service (FSB). “They have more materials and know better,” Zhirinovskiy was quoted as saying by TASS.

United Russia lawmakers announced working on the report in March 2017, following U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen calling for a probe into Russia’s state-run propaganda TV channel RT. “We have good reason to believe that RT News is coordinating with the Russian government to spread misinformation and undermine our democratic process,” Shaheen had said.

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