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'Foreign Agents' Given State Funding, While Pro-Kremlin Bikers Shunned

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Three Russian non-governmental organizations which have been labeled "foreign agents" have been awarded grants, a list of winners on the presidential fund's website shows.

The NGOs include the independent Levada Center pollster, which received a grant of 2 million rubles ($33,000). Other organizations to be given funding include the regional Samarnaya Guberniya fund and the NGO Development Center .

All three NGOs were labeled "foreign agents," under a law that marks as such organizations that receive foreign funding and engage in political activities. Those groups included in the Justice Ministry's registry are subject to additional checks and are required to identify all publications as having been produced by a "foreign agent," a label with Soviet-era connotations of espionage.

Meanwhile, the pro-Kremlin biker group The Night Wolves failed to obtain presidential funding for the first time since 2012. The bikers had applied for a grant of 15 million rubles

to fund several “patriotic” projects, including a New Year’s event for children, the Vedomosti paper reports. In 2015, the patriotic bikers received 9 million rubles for a similar event.

The largest grant of 55 million rubles was handed to the Golden Mask theater awards.

The committee responsible for distributing the grant was chaired by the former prime minister and now first deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Sergei Kirienko.

In total, 2.25 billion rubles ($37.5 mln) was made available to about 970 organizations, the Interfax news agency says.

Related article: Russian Biker Gang Receives Presidential Grants for Children's Shows

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