

Kremlin Backs Media Opt-Out From Broadcasting Winter Games If Olympians Are Barred

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The Kremlin has says it would understand if Russia's state-run television opted out of broadcasting the Winter Olympics next February.

Russia faces an all-out ban from the 2018 Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, with the International Olympic Committee [set](#) to rule on Russia's participation in early December. The global anti-doping body this week [refused](#) to reinstate Russia's anti-doping agency for the third year straight.

The state-run media holding VGTRK [told](#) the Interfax news agency that its channels will not broadcast the Olympics if the Russian national team is banned, confirming press reports that appeared earlier Friday.

Gazprom-Media, which owns the sports channel Match TV, [said](#) Russian viewers would

“obviously” lose interest in the games without Russia.

The Vedomosti business daily said Russian channels would be unable to turn a profit on low viewership, reporting that licenses for the 2018 Winter Games and the 2020 Winter Olympics in Japan cumulatively cost \$40 million.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov echoed the point, saying “broadcasting the Olympics ties in with buying expensive rights.”

“It’s very obvious that our team’s absence in the Olympics will lead to lower interest in these broadcasts from the Russian audience,” the RBC business portal [cited](#) him as saying.

Clean Russian athletes may be able to compete under a neutral flag and without the Russian national anthem, a proposition that high-level officials rejected as a non-starter.

Shortly after the World Anti-Doping Agency ruled Russia’s agency non-compliant with anti-doping codes on Thursday, Russian officials came out in droves to [dismiss](#) the decision as politically motivated.

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