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Olympic Whistleblower Rodchenkov Fears for Life, Lawyer Says

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Grigory Rodchenkov (Vitaliy Belousov / TASS)

A key whistleblower in uncovering Russia's state-sponsored doping scheme fears for his life following the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s decision on Tuesday to bar the Russian national team from the 2018 Winter Games, his lawyer says.

The former head of Russia's anti-doping agency Grigory Rodchenkov fled to the United States where he told The New York Times that he provided athletes banned substances — including during the 2014 Sochi Winter Games in Russia. He has since been admitted to the U.S. witness protection program.

In a statement to the Inside the Games sports website, Rodchenkov's lawyer Jim Walden said his client will nonetheless still be "looking over the shoulder for the rest of his life." The Kremlin, he said, is a "very determined and difficult adversary."

Rodchenkov released his diary to The New York Times last month ahead of the IOC decision,

detailing his meetings with ex-sports minister Vitaly Mutko. Mutko was banned for life by the IOC on Tuesday, a decision Walden said was “wholly appropriate. "

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Russian officials and state television have portrayed Rodchenkov as a mentally ill person who is seeking attention. He has also received death threats.

Last month, the honorary president of Russia’s Olympic Committee Leonid Tyagachev said Rodchenkov “should be shot for lying.”

The whistleblower expressed support for the Russian ban, according to Walden’s statement on his behalf.

"[Tuesday]’s decision by the IOC sends a powerful message that it will not tolerate state-sponsored cheating by any nation,” the statement says.

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