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Embattled Football Chief Mutko Steps Down to Fight Doping Ban

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Vitaly Mutko / Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Six months before the start of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, Vitaly Mutko has temporarily stepped aside from his role as the head of Russia's Football Union to fight his lifetime ban from the Olympics.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) handed Mutko a lifetime ban earlier this month for his role in a state-run doping scheme at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. Mutko has been a key figure behind preparations for next year's World Cup in Russia.

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At a press conference on Monday, a defiant Mutko said that he would temporarily step down as head of the Football Union (RFS) to appeal his lifetime Olympic ban with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, which he plans to file on Tuesday.

“During the course of the court proceedings, I am temporarily suspending my role as president of the RFS — for a period of up to 6 months,” he said.

Later on Monday, FIFA issued a statement saying it welcomed Mutko's decision, “which was also taken in the best interest of the World Cup next summer,” the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Commenting on Mutko’s decision, FIFA said that preparations for the World Cup will continue as planned.

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