The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Russian Athletes Disappear From Competition After Doping Agency Arrives

January 17, 2018

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More than 30 Russian athletes withdrew from a tournament in Siberia over the weekend after the unannounced arrival of anti-doping officials.

Russia has a checkered history with the use of banned performance-enhancing drugs by its athletes, a legacy of the Soviet Union backed by historical evidence and testing records. The country's team was banned last month from participating in the 2018 Winter Olympics over allegations of a state-run doping scheme at the 2014 Games in Sochi.

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A total of 36 Russian athletes suddenly dropped out from a regional athletics competition in

the Siberian city of Irkutsk after Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) officials arrived for an inspection, the Championat.com sports website reported Wednesday.

Dmitry Shlyakhtin, the President of Russia's Athletics Federation, said he was "not surprised" by the disappearance of so many athletes.

"We requested for doping-control officers to appear as often as possible at regional athletics competitions," he was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency on Wednesday.

"We took this step because we know that there are many problems at the lower level."

The Championat website listed 11 adults and 25 youth athletes under the age of 23 as either declining to participate or appearing with sick notes during the Jan. 13-14 contest.

"The list of athletes who failed to participate will be passed to RUSADA, which has the right to strengthen inspections of these athletes," Shlyakhtin said.

"Our suspicion that the doping situation is not spot-free in all regions has increased even more."

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