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Doping Officials Crash Russian Women's Hockey Team Practice Before Olympics

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Yelena Rusko / TASS

International anti-doping officers crashed in on the Russian women's Olympic hockey team with an unannounced inspection, disrupting their first practice in South Korea four days ahead of the Winter Games.

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) officers summoned 16 of the 23-member women's hockey team players hours before practice, Russia's Match TV sports broadcaster reported on Monday. Russia's Olympic team has been reduced by bans over state-run doping claims, though individual Russian athletes have been cleared to participate on a case-by-case basis.

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"We had to hold downsized practice since doping officers took away half the team," team coach Alexei Chistyakov told Match TV.

The news comes as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) declined to invite 13 Russian athletes and two coaches who were cleared of doping by the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last week.

CAS president John Coates promised to publish the sports court's reasoning behind lifting lifetime Olympic bans from 28 Russian athletes "as soon as possible," after IOC criticism that the court had failed to do so.

Russia's neutral-flagged women's hockey team will play its first match against the Canadian team this Sunday.

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