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Russia to Stage 'Alternative' Winter Olympics in March

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An Olympic volunteer carries the Olympic flag on behalf of Russia's team, dressed in gray, at the Opening Ceremony on Friday. **Valery Sharifulin/ TASS**

Russia next month will hold an "alternative" sporting competition for its winter athletes banned from the Olympic Games kicking off today in South Korea.

Some 168 clean Russian athletes have been approved to compete in South Korea since the International Olympic Committee (IOC) imposed a blanket ban on the national team over doping claims in December.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov instructed cabinet members to organize alternative games with the same monetary rewards as the ongoing Winter Games, the Vedomosti business daily reported last week.

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“I think this [alternative competition] will take place after the Olympic Games, in March,” Interfax cited Russia’s former sports minister and current Deputy Prime Minister, Vitaly Mutko, as saying Thursday.

On Friday, Peskov said there is “no doubt” the alternative games will take place.

“Work on this issue is underway now and such Games are being arranged,” he was cited as saying by state-run TASS news agency.

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