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U.S. Criticism of Russian Vote Based on 'Illiterate Lies,' Election Official Says

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

Russia's senior election official has hit back at U.S. State Department criticism that Russian authorities denied observer status to media outlets with ties to opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The Central Election Commission refused to give accreditation to 4,500 monitors from Navalny's media organization and 850 monitors from the Golos election-monitoring group in the lead-up to the March 18 presidential vote. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert criticized the CEC's decision in a tweet on Saturday, asking "What are you trying to hide, Russia?"

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"This is an absolutely illiterate lie," CEC chairwoman Ella Pamfilova said in response to the

criticism Tuesday, as cited by the state-run TASS news agency.

“We didn’t deny anything to anyone [...] Everyone who wanted to, monitored at the polling stations,” TASS cited Pamfilova as saying.

Pamfilova went on to say that accreditation was denied to monitoring groups that had incorrectly filled out their applications.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry responded directly to Nauert’s tweet Friday, asking her to “stop spreading fakes” and to “please stay out of” Russia’s 2018 presidential elections.

Embed:

> Once again: stop spreading fakes! Those “independent media observers” were denied accreditation because they represented media without registration. We want legitimate and fair elections. So please stay out of them
>
> — MFA Russia ⊠⊠ (@mfa_russia) March 16, 2018

U.S. President Donald Trump has yet to congratulate President Vladimir Putin on his re-election to a fourth term, an oversight that the Kremlin has said it did not consider unfriendly.

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