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U.S. Requests Doping Tests of Russian World Cup Team

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Pilar Olivares / Reuters

The United States reportedly requested results from Russian footballers' doping tests following a sudden improvement in performance during the World Cup.

FIFA vowed rigorous doping tests at the tournament following allegations that Russia ran a state-run doping program in past competitions, a charge Moscow has denied. The World Cup host country started off the competition as the lowest ranked out of 32 teams, and has since won two unexpected victories that ensured their team's advance to the knockout stages.

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FIFA refused to reveal how many drug tests it had conducted during the tournament or whether any tests were taken beyond those carried out after games, British newspaper The Daily Telegraph reported Thursday.

“Extraordinary performances demand additional tests,” Travis Tygart, head of the United States Anti-Doping Agency, told the Telegraph, citing unspecified international rules.

A FIFA spokesman told the publication to "please understand we cannot comment" on doping tests during the competition. The spokesman previously called the Russian squad “one of the most tested teams prior to the 208 FIFA World Cup.”

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The state-run TASS news agency said Friday that Russian players had taken over 300 anti-doping tests, all of them clean, in 2018 alone.

Russia’s Football Union (RFU) rejected Tygart’s demand, and called the allegations of doping “simple bitterness.” Its honorary president Vyacheslav Koloskov said players were “repeatedly” subjected to doping tests at their training base north of Moscow before the championship, along with post-match testing.

“All of this irritates them,” Koloskov told the RBC business portal, referring to the American and British sports authorities attitude towards the Russian team's victories. The statements are part of an effort to undermine Russia’s “success in hosting the tournament,” he said.

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