

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Dylan Martinez / Reuters

Chequered bleus

France [claimed](#) the World Cup title for the second time in its history after beating Croatia 4-2 at Moscow's Luzhniki stadium on Sunday, bringing Russia's month-long hosting of the football tournament to a close.

Before the match, the world's largest country by landmass handed over the World Cup hosting mantle to the emir of one of the smallest states, Qatar, which is due to organize the tournament in 2022.

World coup

The tournament elicited high praise from world leaders including U.S. President [Donald Trump](#), who [called](#) it "one of the best ever" World Cups.

President Vladimir Putin said that Russia could be proud of its successful World Cup and [promised](#) to extend Russia's visa-free travel for foreigners with fan IDs until the end of 2018.

Nostalgic for Stalin

Activists from Russia's Pussy Riot band [stormed the field dressed as police officers](#) in the second half of the final on Sunday, [demanding](#) the release of political prisoners, freedom of speech online, freedom to protest and allowing political competition.

"Sometimes I regret that it's not 1937," a man is [heard](#) saying in a social media video that appears to show the pitch invaders being questioned by security officials at the stadium moments after their stunt. The year refers to the height of political repressions in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin.

Reverse indictment

Russia's Foreign Ministry [ridiculed](#) the U.S. Justice Department's indictment last week of 12 Russian intelligence officers with election meddling as a news "dump to spoil the atmosphere before the Russian-American summit" in Helsinki between Putin and Trump on Monday.

The ministry accused the U.S. of perpetuating a "shameful comedy," adding that its authors "will sooner or later have to be held accountable for the damage they inflicted on American democracy."

Unexpected death

Pyotr Ofitserov, an entrepreneur and co-defendant in a fraud case with opposition leader Alexei Navalny, has reportedly [died](#) after being [hospitalized](#) with a concussion and head injury last week.

Ofitserov and Navalny were handed suspended sentences in 2013 for embezzlement, in a court case that the European Court of Human Rights [said](#) had violated their right to a fair trial. Navalny called Ofitserov "a real honest man" in an obituary [published](#) on his blog on Saturday.

'Pure coincidence'

The government's announcement of plans to raise the retirement age on the opening day of the World Cup was "pure coincidence," Russia's first deputy prime minister [said](#) in an interview on the last day of the football tournament.

"There was no correlation, of course," Anton Siluanov said. Lawmakers are reportedly scheduled this Thursday to [debate](#) the legislation to progressively raise the pension age over the next decade and a half.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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