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Russia's Primorye Election Results Annulled Over Reports of Voter Fraud

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Anton Balashov / TASS

An election committee in Russia's Far East region of Primorye has voted to annul the results of Sunday's gubernatorial elections after reports of vote-rigging, a rare admission for Russia of ballot interference.

The decision came a day after Russia's top election official recommended that Sunday's regional election should be re-run following allegations that it had been rigged to secure victory for the Kremlin's candidate. During the elections, the incumbent from the ruling United Russia party, Andrei Tarasenko, surged in the polls to secure an unexpected victory after having consistently trailed his challenger from the Communist Party, Andrei Ishchenko.

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New elections should be held within three months of the annulled Sept. 16 vote, a representative of the Primorye election commission said.

The decision means Tarasenko will stay on as acting governor until the third round of voting, which the regional legislative assembly plans to announce next Wednesday.

Unnamed sources close to Tarasenko's camp told The Bell news website that they had sought to derail the vote once it became clear that Ishchenko's lead was insurmountable.

Ishchenko's camp plans to appeal the Primorye election commission in court, the Communist Party challenger told Interfax.

In addition to Tarasenko, three other United Russia candidates were forced into runoff elections this month in what is the worst showing for Kremlin-backed candidates since 2012.

Though there is no immediate threat to the United Russia party's grip on power, it suggests growing discontent over living standards and unpopular plans to delay the retirement age.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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