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France's Macron Lifts Ban on Access for Russia Today Channel

By Bloomberg

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Emmanuel Macron / European Parliament / Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

French President Emmanuel Macron has lifted a ban on Russia Today, the Kremlin-funded TV station that he said smeared him during the 2017 presidential elections and worked as a propaganda tool.

The channel's journalists will now be allowed to gain accreditation for events organized by the Elysee Palace, said a senior official in the president's team, declining to be named according to ground rules. RT reporters were allowed to accredit to the centenary commemorations of the World War I armistice on Nov. 11 in France for the first time since Macron was elected in May last year.

Macron last week awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest distinction, to Kirill Dmitriev, the head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund, for his contribution to strengthening ties between the two countries.

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Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova this month accused French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux of "boorish behavior" over the ban on RT and Sputnik news. She warned that Russia's "patience is not endless" in permitting French journalists to attend official events, adding that Moscow was "ready to discuss and solve problems based on mutual respect and without ungrounded accusations."

Macron imposed the ban while standing next to Russian President Vladimir Putin at a press conference at Versailles Palace near Paris three weeks after his election. He rebuked Kremlin-run media for engaging in "propaganda" during the campaign and said they wouldn't be allowed access to his administration. RT and the Kremlin both rejected Macron's description of the coverage.

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