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Media Regulator in Russia Starts Checking Legality of BBC's Operations

By Reuters

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Russia's media regulator said on Friday it would carry out checks to determine if the BBC World News channel and BBC internet sites complied with Russian law, a move it described as a response to British pressure on a Russian TV channel.

Roskomnadzor, the regulator, said in a statement its checks were Russia's response to a decision by British media regulator Ofcom, which on Thursday said that Russian broadcaster RT had broken impartiality rules in some of its news and current affairs programmes.

"The results of our check will be announced separately," the Russian regulator said.

There was no immediate comment from either the BBC or Ofcom.

Related article: British Media Watchdog Says RT Broke Impartiality Rules in Skripal Coverage

Ofcom said on Thursday it was considering imposing some kind of sanction on RT, which is financed by the Russian state. It took issue in particular with its coverage of the poisoning in Britain of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

Britain has accused agents working for Russia's military intelligence agency, the GRU, of committing the crime, an allegation Moscow denies.

British Media Secretary Jeremy Wright also weighed in on Thursday, saying what he called RT's mask as an impartial news provider was slipping.

RT rejected Ofcom's findings, saying Ofcom had ignored its explanations and not paid "due regard" to its rights.

Commenting on the launch of the Russian investigation on Friday, Margarita Simonyan, RT's editor-in-chief, said on Twitter that Ofcom had hinted that it planned to strip her channel of its broadcasting licence in Britain.

"[Welcome to the] brave new world," she wrote.

"I assume they [the Russian regulator] will now look to see if the BBC expresses alternative points of view. With a microscope."

Russian state media has criticized the BBC in recent days, accusing it of trying to falsely prove that Moscow was involved in whipping up street protests in France, a charge that Russia rejects.

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