The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

IOC Athletes' Body Indicates Support for Fresh Action Against Russia

By Reuters

January 04, 2019

Matt Dunham AP / TASS

The International Olympic Committee's athlete commission indicated on Friday it would support fresh sanctions on Russia by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) after a missed doping data deadline.

A WADA Compliance Review Committee (CRC) will meet in Montreal on Jan. 14-15 to hear from an inspection team whose five members were not allowed to retrieve data from a Moscow laboratory by a Dec. 31 deadline.

The CRC will then submit a report to the WADA executive committee and could recommend that Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) once again be ruled non-compliant and face new sanctions.

The Athletes' Commission went out on a limb in supporting WADA's decision last September

to conditionally reinstate RUSADA, which had been suspended since November 2015 over alleged state-backed doping.

Related article: WADA 'Bitterly Disappointed' at Russia's Failure to Meet Deadline

Other athletes' groups and anti-doping organizations had spoken out strongly against RUSADA's reinstatement while the Russian athletics federation remains banned by the IAAF.

"As members of the IOC Athletes' Commission, we are extremely disappointed and concerned by the fact that RUSADA has missed the deadline," the Athletes' Commission said in a statement.

"We expect the CRC in its meeting...to make the appropriate recommendations to the WADA Executive Committee in the light of its decision of September 2018.

"These recommendations should lead to immediate measures and actions."

While not spelling out the "appropriate recommendations," the statement noted that support for RUSADA's provisional reinstatement had been made on the understanding that a missed deadline would lead to "stronger and more effective sanctions."

Athletes' Commission chair Kirsty Coventry, an Olympic swimming champion and now Zimbabwean Sports Minister, told Reuters in October that "if we don't get what we want then we must be strong in our reaction.

"If it is not done we will have to make some tough decisions," she added.

The head of the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) challenged WADA on Thursday to make a quick ruling.

"Let's see if a decision on January 14 happens but let's not forget that's it's just a recommendation that has to go to the WADA executive committee," USADA chief Travis Tygart told Reuters.

Related article: Russian Official Slams WADA as the 'NATO of Sports'

"Are they going to call an emergency executive committee meeting on the 15th, which is what they should do? Being in limbo as a clean athlete is what is extremely frustrating about this process."

Tygart has called the situation "a total joke," while Britain's anti-Doping Agency athlete commission and Drug Free Sport New Zealand are among groups to have urged WADA to find RUSADA non-compliant for missing the deadline.

CRC chairman Jonathan Taylor defended the decision to wait until mid-January, however.

"In cases of non-compliance, the special fast-track procedure also requires WADA to give the Russian authorities a fair opportunity to make a submission for the consideration of the CRC,"

the BBC quoted the British lawyer as saying.

"It might be said that there is nothing to be considered, the non-compliance is plain, the reasons are irrelevant, so following due process is futile and therefore unnecessary," he added.

"But the courts do not like such arguments, and therefore the risk of successful challenge would be significant, which I don't think anyone would want."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/01/04/ioc-athletes-body-indicates-support-for-fresh-action-against-russia-a64043