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WADA to Inspect Moscow Lab for Doping Violations

By Reuters

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

With the clock ticking towards new sanctions, Russian authorities said on Monday they would allow a World Anti-Doping Agency inspection team to return to a Moscow laboratory to retrieve data it had earlier been denied.

Russia's Sport Minister Pavel Kolobkov said WADA officials would return to Moscow on Wednesday. WADA also confirmed in a press release that a three-person expert team would be allowed entry to the tainted Moscow laboratory and data it was prevented from securing during a visit in December.

Access to the lab and data before a Dec. 31 deadline was a condition of WADA's September decision to reinstate the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA).

However, extraction of data stored in the facility's Laboratory Information Management

System (LIMS), was not completed due to a technicality leaving RUSADA again at risk of being found non-compliant.

Russian authorities had said that the inspection team's equipment was not certified under Russian law.

The decision to allow the new inspection team access comes with WADA preparing to impose possible new sanctions on RUSADA.

RUSADA was suspended in 2015 after a WADA-commissioned report outlined evidence of state-backed, systematic doping in Russian athletics, allegations Moscow has denied.

A WADA Compliance Review Committee (CRC) is scheduled to meet at the agency's Montreal headquarters on Jan. 14-15 where they were expected to hear from the original five-member inspection team.

The CRC is then due to submit a report to the WADA executive committee and could recommend that RUSADA once again be ruled non-compliant and face new sanctions.

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"While WADA is obliged under the ISCCS (International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories) to give every opportunity to RUSADA, we are continuing to act on the basis of the 31 December deadline having been missed, with all the consequences that failure could bring," WADA president Craig Reedie said in a statement.

"This week's mission to Moscow is not only about us following due process and precedent.

"If the mission is successful in acquiring the data, it will break a long impasse and will potentially lead to many cases being actioned."

Russian authorities must also ensure that any re-analysis of samples required by WADA, following review of the laboratory data, is completed by no later than June 30, 2019.

The latest developments are sure to trigger more criticism and attacks from athletes and anti-doping groups who have been pushing WADA to take swift, firm action against Russia for the failure to hand over data by the required deadline.

"(It) appears to be the sequel to the cat and mouse game between WADA and Russia we have unfortunately come to expect," Travis Tygart, head of the United States Anti-Doping Agency told Reuters in an email.

"We are all holding our breath as to how this one will end come Jan. 9 and whether WADA will be finally given the data on the roughly 9,000 presumptive positive tests results on over 4,000 Russian athletes that hopefully have not been destroyed."

WADA said the authentication and analysis of the data will be crucial in order to build strong cases against cheats and exonerate other athletes suspected of having participated in widespread doping exposed in WADA-backed investigations.

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