

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

January 27, 2020



Around 700 people re-enacted the Siege of Leningrad – a key World War II battle that lasted for 872 days and left hundreds of thousands of people dead from starvation or bombardment – near the Russian city of St. Petersburg. **Alexander Demianchuk / TASS**

Pardon request

A U.S.-Israeli woman jailed in Russia on drug charges for having cannabis in her luggage during an airport layover has asked for a pardon, Interfax [reported](#), citing a statement from her lawyers.

The Kremlin said earlier that it was impossible for Naama Issachar to be granted a presidential pardon without her first formally requesting one. Israel has called on Russia to release Issachar, who was sentenced by a Russian court to seven and a half years in jail for drug offenses in October.

Virus evacuations

Russia is consulting with China about possibly evacuating Russian citizens from the Chinese city of Wuhan and Hubei province, the center of an outbreak of a new flu-like virus, the state-run RIA news agency [cited](#) the Russian Embassy in Beijing as saying.

No Russians have yet been infected with the new coronavirus, RIA quoted the embassy's press attache in China as saying.

Protest review

President Vladimir Putin has ordered Russia's Prosecutor General to investigate whether the guilty [verdict](#) for Moscow protester Konstantin Kotov was lawful, the Kremlin [said](#).

A Moscow court sentenced Kotov, a 34-year-old programmer, to four years in prison in September for "repeated" participation in unauthorized rallies, under a widely criticized law that criminalizes nonviolent protests. The court said Kotov "disregarded basic constitutional principles" because he continued to take part in unauthorized protests after being found guilty of violating legislation on public gatherings.

Cardinal out?

Contradictory reports emerged of longtime Kremlin aide Vladislav Surkov's resignation after years of handling Russia's role in the conflict between pro-Moscow separatists and Ukrainian government forces in eastern Ukraine.

Surkov's aide Alexei Chesnakov [told](#) Bloomberg that he resigned over unspecified policy differences, while Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied both the resignation and a change of policy on Ukraine.

Death in church

Former Russian Orthodox Church spokesman Vsevolod Chaplin has died at the age of 51 outside his church in Moscow, TASS [reported](#).

The preliminary cause of Chaplin's death was determined to be cardiac arrest, an unnamed medical source told the state-run news agency.

Siege re-enacted

Around 700 people re-enacted the Siege of Leningrad — a key World War II battle that lasted for 872 days and left hundreds of thousands dead from starvation or bombardment — near the Russian city of St. Petersburg.

The re-enactors brought 30 pieces of historical military hardware to re-enact the Jan. 27, 1944, lifting of the blockade, which became one of the longest and deadliest sieges in the history of warfare.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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