

Siberian Scientists Block ‘Bombshell’ Pollution Report Ahead of Elections – Reports

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The Russian Academy of Sciences’ (RAS) Siberian branch reportedly found that 78% of Russia's most polluted cities are in Siberia. **Andrey Gordeev / TASS**

Siberian scientists have blocked the publication of a “bombshell” pollution report out of fear of angering voters ahead of this fall’s legislative elections, the Tayga.info news website [reported](#) Friday.

The Russian Academy of Sciences’ (RAS) Siberian branch reportedly determined that 78% of Russia's two dozen most polluted cities are located in Siberia and linked the findings to increased rates of birth defects, childhood disease and cancers in the region.

Related article: [Black Smog Raises Siberian City’s Alarms](#)

According to Tayga.info, the RAS’ Siberian branch has decided to classify the report and

restricted access to a YouTube video of its public debates held last Thursday.

“Imagine us publishing these reports with concentrated information like a bombshell ahead of the elections,” Alexei Kontorovich, founder of the Siberian branch’s oil and gas geology institute, said in the video that Tayga.info said it still had access to.

Russians head to the polls this September to decide whether the pro-Kremlin United Russia party will retain its supermajority in parliament.

Polls show United Russia’s public support dipping below 30%. Observers predict that the party will still regain its seats through tactics that include fielding [controlled-opposition](#) parties and intimidating or blocking candidates linked to jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

“What will happen? It’s tough to predict. We have no right to do that, that’s why we need to carefully weigh motions for publication. We must not stir up the public with unnecessary questions,” Kontorovich was quoted as saying.

His colleague and the report’s author, Igor Ptashnik, who heads the Siberian RAS branch’s institute of atmospheric optics, [argued](#) to the Open Media news website that the decision to classify the open data-based pollution report has attracted even more attention to it.

When asked by journalists Monday whether the report’s blocking reflects political influence on scientists, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#) the decision was “the decision of the scientists themselves.”

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