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Leaked Audio Instructs Russia Poll Watchers to Ignore Voter Fraud – Reports

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Russian media published an audio leak Tuesday that they say shows a ruling pro-Kremlin party official instructing poll watchers to ignore voter fraud at the upcoming election.

The United Russia party, which was founded by President Vladimir Putin and consistently backs his initiatives, is seeking to maintain its lower-house majority in the Sept. 17-19 parliamentary elections despite its historic unpopularity.

The Siberia-based Taiga.info news website said it had obtained audio of a United Russia functionary telling poll watchers to avoid "making things worse" by filing complaints at the ballot.

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“Even if you see some kind of violation,” a voice is heard saying, “don’t try to write a complaint right away.”

“If you’re in doubt, talk to a [precinct] chairperson or deputy,” it continues. “If they explain to you in a reasoned way that this is not a violation, don’t sit down to write a complaint.”

Taiga.info said it identified one of the voices as that of Irina Karabutina, secretary of both the United Russia branch and the local election commission in the republic of Khakassia, where the training session allegedly took place.

The outlet pointed out that election commission officials like Karabutina are legally prohibited from campaigning.

The voice identified as Karabutina’s was also recorded defending United Russia’s image amid its historically low nationwide approval ratings, Taiga.info reported.

“You need to understand that United Russia is not a party of thieves. Voting for United Russia doesn’t mean voting for thieves,” the voice is heard saying.

United Russia has not yet commented on the reported leak.

Taiga.info’s report comes less than a week after the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper published a leaked recording of alleged efforts to coordinate vote falsification in the Moscow region city of Korolyov, prompting a rapid-response inquiry by the Central Election Commission.

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