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Online Vote Recount Shows No Sign of Election Fraud, Russian Officials Find

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Alexei Venediktov. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow election officials on Thursday said they found no evidence of wrongdoing in online voting in parliamentary elections after a technical recount of the votes.

"The election observation headquarters in Moscow did not find any traces of hacking or ballot stuffing in online voting," the head of the group Alexei Venediktov said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia's opposition raised questions over the legitimacy of the results of the elections to the State Duma after the pro-Kremlin United Russia party won a landslide victory, winning every district in Moscow, a traditionally tough place for Kremlin-backed candidates.

E-voting results reversed early leads secured in the offline vote by opposition candidates and Kremlin-endorsed candidates saw huge swings in their favor and won every district after online votes were tallied.

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The recount conducted Wednesday had no legal force and the election results have already been certified. Several opposition candidates who stood in Moscow have criticized the results, with some launching legal actions to force an investigation into what they say are anomalies in online voting patterns.

Russia's move to online voting — adopted in Moscow and a handful of other regions across the country — was deemed controversial even before the election, with critics saying the system could make it easier for authorities to falsify results.

Venediktov, who is also managing editor of the Ekho Moskvy radio station, said the election observation headquarters would continue analyzing the election data and look at how to develop online voting "in terms of transparency and openness."

Around two million Moscow residents voted online in the parliamentary elections. The ruling United Russia Party received 45% of online votes, compared with 30% overall. Several opposition candidates called on supporters to shun the online voting system, fearing possible falsification — a strategy criticized by Venediktov.

Nationwide statisticians have estimated that half of the official votes received by United Russia in the election could have been falsified.

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