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Russia Duma Passes Law on 'Fake News'

Proposed bill punishes ‘fakes’ about Russian military with up to 15 years in jail.

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duma.gov.ru

Spreading fake news about the Russian military can be punishable by up to 15 years in prison if a new bill is passed in Russia, state-owned news agency TASS reported Friday.

On Friday the State Duma passed a law introducing punishment for spreading fake news about the Russian Armed Forces and the military operation in Ukraine, statements that discredit the armed forces, and calls for sanctions on Russia.

According to deputy Maria Butina and TASS, the document was adopted unanimously.

A group of people that use their position to spread fake information or distribute fake news with falsified evidence could be jailed for 5 to 10 years.

If the falsified information has grave consequences, the punishment will be 10 to 15 years in

prison.

The parliament provided examples of “fakes” about military operations that are punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Some of them include the use of old photos of burned military equipment of the Ukrainian Armed Forces that have been photoshopped to have markings of the Russian military.

The explanatory note to the bill states that the Ukrainian media is using footage of the devastation in the Donbas region from 2014-2015 and passing it off as crimes perpetrated by the Russian military in order to "create a global negative image of Russia as a ‘bloody aggressor’ and whip up panic in society."

The document will be sent to the Federation Council and President Vladimir Putin for signature and may come into effect tomorrow.

Putin announced the beginning of a special military operation in Ukraine on Feb. 24. Since then the government has escalated the on-going suppression of liberal media. Several Russian news outlets - including Dozhd, The Village and Znek.com - have suspended their operations due to mounting pressure and new state restrictions.

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