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Kremlin Dismisses Claims of Russian 'Sabotage Campaign' Against Olympics

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People take pictures of the Eiffel Tower. **Yegor Aleyev / TASS**

The Kremlin on Monday rejected U.S. media claims that Russia may be plotting attacks on critical infrastructure in France during the Olympic Games.

NBC News reported Sunday that acts of sabotage against France's high-speed train network ahead of the opening ceremony last week Friday showed a broad array of security threats to the Olympics, including a "Russian-backed sabotage campaign."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov described the report, without mentioning it by name, as "another hoax and unsubstantiated accusation."

"The fact is, there are many low-brow media outlets out there. Even the respected ones have lately not hesitated to blame Russia for almost everything that happens," Peskov told reporters. "This does not help their image as reliable sources of information."

It remains unclear who carried out coordinated arson attacks on strategic points of the French

rail network early Friday — or if they were deliberately timed to disrupt the Olympics' opening ceremony later that day. French authorities said the train network had been restored by Monday morning.

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Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said authorities "identified a certain number of profiles that could have committed" the acts of sabotage."

But he cautioned against pinning blame on specific groups known for previously attacking France's transport network, saying that "the question is to know whether they were manipulated" or acted "for their own benefit."

Sunday's NBC News report cited past cyber attacks by Russian-backed groups against Western Olympic athletes and the opening ceremony of the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea. It added that potential attacks are now motivated by Western support for Ukraine following Russia's 2022 invasion.

"I think it is an all but certainty that Russian cyber actors, whether it is the [Russian military intelligence agency] GRU [and its hacker group] Sandworm or even the FSB will try to do something surrounding the Games," former U.S. cybersecurity chief Chris Krebs was quoted as saying.

NBC News, citing French and U.S. officials, reported last month that a Russian-Ukrainian citizen arrested after an explosion in northern France may have been "trying to conduct a pro-Russian act of sabotage against a French facility" that supported Ukraine's defense against invading forces.

Last week's arrest of a Russian-born chef, who now faces up to 30 years in jail over a suspected "destabilization" plot against the Paris Games, "highlighted a potential Russian intelligence effort to disrupt the Olympics," the U.S. news outlet added.

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