

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House Chamber for Roll Call votes 658, 659, 660, and 661 on Wednesday, December 6, 2017. Had I been present, I would have voted Nay on Roll Call votes 658, 659, and 660, and I would have voted Yea on Roll Call vote 661.

## RUSSIA BANNED FROM WINTER OLYMPICS BY I.O.C.

**HON. MARCY KAPTUR**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, include in the RECORD following article:

[From the New York Times, Dec. 5, 2017]

RUSSIA BANNED FROM WINTER OLYMPICS BY I.O.C.

(By Rebecca R. Ruiz and Tariq Panja)

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND.—Russia's Olympic team has been barred from the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The country's government officials are forbidden to attend, its flag will not be displayed at the opening ceremony and its anthem will not sound.

Any athletes from Russia who receive special dispensation to compete will do so as individuals wearing a neutral uniform, and the official record books will forever show that Russia won zero medals.

That was the punishment issued Tuesday to the proud sports juggernaut that has long used the Olympics as a show of global force but was exposed for systematic doping in previously unfathomable ways. The International Olympic Committee, after completing its own prolonged investigations that reiterated what had been known for more than a year, handed Russia penalties for doping so severe they were without precedent in Olympics history.

The ruling was the final confirmation that the nation was guilty of executing an extensive state-backed doping program. The scheme was rivaled perhaps only by the notorious program conducted by East Germany throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

Now the sports world will wait to see how Russia responds. Some Russian officials had threatened to boycott if the I.O.C. delivered such a severe punishment.

President Vladimir V. Putin seemed to predict a boycott of the Pyeongchang Games with a defiant dismissal of the doping scandal and a foreign policy in recent years that has centered on the premise that he has rescued Russia from the humiliation inflicted on it by the West after the collapse of the Soviet Union. His spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said no boycott was under discussion before the announcement, however, and the news broke late in the evening in Moscow when an immediate official reaction was unlikely.

In barring Russia's team, Olympic officials left the door open for some Russian athletes. Those with histories of rigorous drug testing may petition for permission to compete in neutral uniforms. A panel appointed by the International Olympic Committee will rule on each athlete's eligibility.

Although it is unknown exactly how many will clear that bar, it is certain that the contingent from Russia will be depleted significantly. Entire sports—such as biathlon and cross-country skiing, in which Russia has excelled and in which its drug violations have been many—could be wiped out completely.

Olympic officials made two seemingly significant concessions to Russia:

Any of its athletes competing under a neutral flag will be referred to as Olympic Athletes from Russia. That is a departure from how the I.O.C. has handled neutral athletes in the past. For example, athletes from Kuwait, which was barred from the 2016 Summer Games, were identified as Independent Olympic Athletes last year in Rio de Janeiro.

Olympics officials said they might lift the ban on Russia in time for the closing ceremony, suggesting the nation's flag could make a symbolic appearance in the final hours of the Pyeongchang Games.

Thomas Bach, president of I.O.C., has said he was perturbed not only by Russia's widespread cheating but by how it had been accomplished: by corrupting the Olympic laboratory that handled drug testing at the Games, and on orders from Russia's own Olympic officials.

"This decision should draw a line under this damaging episode," Mr. Bach said at a news conference, noting that Alexander Zhukov, the president of Russia's Olympic Committee whom the I.O.C. suspended from its membership Tuesday, had issued an apology—something global regulators have long requested from the nation.

In an elaborate overnight operation at the 2014 Sochi Games, a team assembled by Russia's sports ministry tampered with more than 100 urine samples to conceal evidence of top athletes' steroid use throughout the course of competition. More than two dozen Russian athletes have been disqualified from the Sochi standings as a result, and Olympic officials are still sorting through the tainted results and rescinding medals.

At the coming Games, Mr. Bach said Tuesday, a special medal ceremony will reassign medals to retroactive winners from Sochi. But, in light of legal appeals from many of the Russian athletes who have been disqualified by the I.O.C., it is uncertain if all results from Sochi will be finalized in time.

The Russian Olympic Committee was also fined \$15 million on Tuesday, money that global officials said will be put toward drug-testing international athletes.

[Read The Times's report that first laid out the details of Russia's doping scheme, and the exclusive story of a whistle-blower's personal diaries that were shared with investigators.]

The punishment announced Tuesday resembles what antidoping regulators had lobbied for leading up to the 2016 Summer Games, where Russia was allowed to participate but in restricted numbers. It is likely to face a legal appeal from Russia's Olympic Committee.

The decision was announced after top International Olympic Committee officials had met privately with Mr. Zhukov; Vitaly Smirnov, Russia's former sports minister who was last year appointed Mr. Putin to lead a national antidoping commission to redeem Russia's standing in global sports; and Evgenia Medvedeva, a two-time world skating champion.

"Everyone is talking about how to punish Russia, but no one is talking about how to help Russia," Mr. Smirnov said, sipping a hot beverage in the lobby of the Lausanne Palace Hotel before delivering his final appeal to officials. "Of course we want our athletes there, and we want the Russian flag and anthem," he said.

That appeal was rejected in light of the conclusions of Samuel Schmid, a former president of Switzerland whom the Olympic committee appointed last year to review the findings of a scathing investigation commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

"The analysis is clear and water-tight," Mr. Schmid said Tuesday. In a 30-page report, he affirmed the credibility of whistle-blowers and investigators who had followed their leads and evidence.

Tuesday's penalty was in line with what had been advocated by two key whistle-blowers whose accounts upended Russia's standing in global sports over the last several years and were cited in Mr. Schmid's report: Grigory Rodchenkov, the chemist who spent 10 years as Russia's antidoping lab chief and was key to carrying out the cheating schemes in Sochi; and Vitaly Stepanov, a former employee of Russia's antidoping agency who married a runner for Russia's national team and was the first to speak publicly about the nation's institutionalized cheating.

"The world knows that hundreds of Olympic dreams have been stolen by the doping system in the country where I was born," Mr. Stepanov wrote in an affidavit submitted to the International Olympic Committee this fall. He had suggested banning Russia's Olympic Committee for two years, or until the nation's antidoping operations are recertified by regulators. Russia and its individual athletes are all but certain to miss the 2018 Paralympics given regulators' refusal to recertify the nation last month.

"The evidence is clear, that the doping system in Russia has not yet been truly reformed," Mr. Stepanov wrote.

Dr. Rodchenkov is living in an undisclosed location in the United States under protection of federal authorities. In August, "Icarus," a film detailing Dr. Rodchenkov's move to the United States and tell-all account, was released. In addition to sworn testimony and forensic evidence, Mr. Schmid cited the film as further evidence in his report.

"Russia's consistent denials lack any credibility, and its failure to produce all evidence in its possession only further confirms its high-level complicity," Jim Walden, a lawyer for Dr. Rodchenkov, said Tuesday. The Russian sports ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Tuesday's decision could have consequences for another major sports event scheduled to be held in Russia, next year's \$11 billion soccer World Cup. The nation's deputy prime minister, Vitaly Mutko, was Russia's top sports official during the 2014 Sochi Games and was directly implicated by Dr. Rodchenkov. As part of Tuesday's ruling, Mr. Mutko was barred for life from the Olympics.

Mr. Mutko is also the chairman of the local organizing committee for the World Cup, but FIFA said in a statement Tuesday that the I.O.C.'s punishments for Olympic doping would have "no impact" on its preparations for the tournament, which begins in June.

## IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY

**HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Legal Services of New Jersey on its 50th anniversary. This milestone and the