

Probe Opened Into Phony Poll Stations

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The  **Moscow Times**

Investigators in the Vladimir region have opened a criminal case into the circumstances surrounding two phony polling stations, which were set up for December's contested State Duma elections, several news outlets reported Wednesday afternoon.

The report — which first appeared on Lenta.ru — cited a [statement](#) on the web site of the regional branch of the Investigative Committee. But in less than an hour after Lenta's story appeared, the statement was deleted from the committee's web site, Izvestia [reported](#).

Irina Minina, spokeswoman for the regional investigators, admitted to The Moscow Times on Thursday that the statement had been removed after "certain circumstances emerged." But she refused to confirm that a case had been opened and would not elaborate further.

Calls to the regional elections commission went unanswered Thursday.

According to initial news reports, the bogus polling stations did not actually open on election day, but it was later reported that 6,000 voters had cast ballots there.

The criminal cases were opened on charges of falsifying election papers and voting results,

which carry maximum sentences of three and four years in prison, respectively.

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