

Kremlin Spokesman Blames Economics for Dozhd's Woes

March 27, 2014



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Russia's biggest cable providers decided to drop independent television station Dozhd from their packages due to economic and logistical problems, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Several providers stopped broadcasting Dozhd over a World War II poll it ran in January. Many observers said that the move, which took a heavy toll on the company's revenue, was a politically motivated attempt to close down the channel, known for giving airtime to Kremlin opponents.

In an interview with Dozhd on Wednesday, however, Peskov said that some of the providers that dropped the channel might be having "problems with bandwidth," while others made the decision based on economic considerations.

He spoke to Dozhd during the channel's special fundraising marathon that runs from March 24-30. During that time, Dozhd will provide free Internet coverage of its shows, which will

feature discussions about freedom of speech and the state of independent media in Russia as well as concerts.

Peskov also said it is his understanding that Dozhd is still on air "in a number of regions and on a number of cable providers," and wished the channel luck in finding sufficient funding to stay on air.

As of Thursday afternoon, Dozhd had raised enough money to keep the channel running for an additional 30 days.

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