

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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A police station at Tokyo's Haneda International Airport where Belarusian sprinter Kristina Timanovskaya presumably is now **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Opposition athlete

Belarusian athlete Kristina Timanovskaya said Sunday that team officials had tried to [remove](#) her from Japan after she criticized Belarus's athletics federation for entering her into a relay race in Tokyo without giving her notice.

The 24-year-old later said she was "safe" and under police protection in Japan after claiming her country had forced her to leave the Tokyo Olympics.

Forced layoffs

The U.S. State Department said Moscow is forcing it to lay off nearly 200 Russian employees in its Russian diplomatic missions, saying the move will constrict diplomatic efforts and embassy operations.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said 182 Russian employees and dozens of contractors in Moscow, Vladivostok and Yekaterinburg would be let go after a Russian government order in April in retaliation for U.S. actions against Russia.

Weekend detentions

Russian police [detained](#) at least 15 members of late writer Eduard Limonov's radical nationalist party in Moscow and three other cities for protesting against the authorities' failure to register their party, Novaya Gazeta reported Saturday.

Elsewhere, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#) Saturday that St. Petersburg border guards had detained three Cubans who planned to cross the Neva River into Estonia on an inflatable mattress with plans to continue their journey to Spain.

Press freedom

Russian authorities late Friday blocked the websites of the Gulagu.net rights group and exiled ex-tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky's investigative [Dossier Center](#) website.

Also late Friday, Russia's Foreign Ministry [announced](#) that it has allocated \$1 million to UNESCO's [program](#) that promotes free media in developing countries.

Arms plant deaths

Four workers died and another three were in hospital with burns Friday following a fire at a defense industry plant in southern Russia, authorities [said](#) Sunday.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade implied that the workers at the Kamensky chemical plant in the southern Rostov region violated safety regulations.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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