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MailOnline

Met Office 'manipulated climate change figures' says Russian think tank linked to President Putin

By [Will Stewart](#)

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An explosive new claim that the Meteorological Office in Britain 'manipulated' climate change figures has come from a leading Russian think-tank founded by a former adviser to Vladimir Putin.

As the Copenhagen summit comes to a climax on Friday, it was alleged that Siberian weather statistics were selected in a way that masks evidence not showing global warming.

The think tank strongly disputes the use of data from the Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Change which were released in a bid to diffuse the recent row over hacked emails from the Climate Research Unit in East Anglia.



People clean the snow from a globe in Copenhagen before the start of today's round of negotiations

The emails were seized upon by global warming sceptics as evidence that academics were massaging the figures.

The Moscow-based Institute of Economic Analysis (IEA) claimed the Hadley Centre used statistics from weather stations in Russian and Siberia that fitted its theory of global warming, while often ignoring those that did not.

The report was seized on by media with close ties to the Kremlin, which is opposed to rigid new curbs on carbon emissions demanded by many Western countries at the Danish summit.

Most of Russia's income is derived from oil and gas, which means its economy could be hit by curbs on carbon emissions.

'Russian meteorological station data did not substantiate the global-warming theory,' stated semi-official RIA Novosti news agency.



Gordon Brown (R) hands the GLOBE Award for International Leadership on the Environment to Mexican President Felipe Calderon (L) at the Bella Center in Copenhagen

It went further in saying the Hadley Centre 'probably tampered with Russian-climate data' by using statistics from only a quarter of available weather stations in its report.

'Over 40 per cent of Russian territory was not included in global-temperature calculations for reasons other than the lack of meteorological stations and observations,' claimed Kommersant newspaper, owned by pro-Kremlin oligarch Alisher Usmanov.

It was alleged the Hadley data known as HadCRUT used incomplete findings from Russian met stations 'far more often than those providing complete observations'.

'When choosing between stations with breaks in measurements and those with regular measurements in same region, HadCRUT would include the station with gaps in information but with a more obvious picture of warming,' said Kommersant.

And data was also skewed to include stations in large populated areas more frequently than the correct data of remote stations, it was alleged.



An Indian policeman tries to grab a banner from a Greenpeace activist during a protest outside the US embassy in New Delhi today



The protest, staged in the background of the ongoing UN climate conference in Copenhagen was held to try and get US President Barack Obama to commit to long term finance and emission targets

One account of the 21 page report said: 'The scale of global warming was exaggerated due to temperature distortions for Russia accounting for 12.5 per cent of the world's land mass.'

The institute - founded by Andrey Illarionov, a former pro-Western economic aide to Putin who quit the Kremlin criticising his authoritarian policies - alleges that the Hadley report over estimated warming in Russia by up to 0.64C between the 1870s and 1990s, based on fuller statistics.

Illarionov, who edited the report and is also a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, has a track record of strong opposition to the climate change lobby.

The report's language is less lurid than some accounts of it, but it stated: 'It is not easy to find a rational explanation to such a selective approach. Although one can build up a theory.

'Analysing the temperature trends received from met stations it is hard to get rid of the impression that they do not show any noticeable trend to warming in second half of the 20th and beginning of 21st centuries.'



Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is linked to the 'think tank'

It stressed: 'It is easy to see that the met stations are situated not evenly, their concentration is substantially and predictably higher in western and southern regions of the country, and notably lower in northern and eastern.'

It raises the fear that similar methods may have been used in other countries.

In releasing its report last week, the Met Office said it used a network of individual stations designated by the World Meteorological Organisation.

'The subset of stations is evenly distributed across the globe and provides a fair representation of changes in mean temperature on a global scale over land.'

The hacked emails from climate change experts at the University of East Anglia were released to the world via a Russian internet server.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel this morning said that U.S. pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions were insufficient and warned that talks at the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen could fail.

In a speech to parliament before flying to the conference for the final two days, Merkel said failure to reach a deal to fight climate change could do lasting damage.

'The news that we've been receiving is not good,' Merkel said. 'At the moment there doesn't seem to be any reasonable negotiation process in sight but I am hoping that the presence of over 100 leaders can give the necessary impulse.'

Merkel, whose country is the world's sixth largest emitter of greenhouse gases but a leader in renewable energy technology, said the commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the United States and other industrial nations had to be improved.

'I must say very honestly that the United States offer to cut (emissions) by 4 per cent compared to 1990 levels is not ambitious,' she said.

There would be no agreement unless developing nations, especially China and India, were included, she added.



Smokes billow from chimneys at a chemical factory in Yiyang county of Shangrao, Jiangxi province, China



German Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a government declaration on the Copenhagen climate summit at the Reichstag

People around the world were looking to the leaders meeting in Copenhagen to reach an agreement, she said. It was essential that nations agreed to strive to limit a rise in global temperatures to two degrees Celsius.

'All (scientific) reports make clear that if we can't agree to limit global warming to two degrees then the costs will be far greater than a change in our lifestyles,' she said.

'Therefore we need first a commitment from all countries to the two-degree goal - that means limiting global warming to a maximum of two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

'If we are not able to achieve this, then the summit in Copenhagen will be a failure. At this time, I'm not sure if we can achieve it. But I will do all I can together with our environment minister to ensure we do get there.'

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Not everybody loses with global warming. Russia would welcome it because its ports will be open all year and a new shipping route will open up Siberia from Europe via the pole. Its cities will not be subjected to a freeze up each winter and many parts will become habitable.