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Top Investigator Accuses Krymsk Officials of Lying

By Alexandra Odynova

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Investigators suspect Krymsk district officials of negligence in their response to the deadly floods that hit in early July.

The country's top investigator accused Krymsk town officials on Wednesday of falsely saying they had warned residents about the flood that killed at least 171 people earlier this month.

Alexander Bastrykin, head of the Investigative Committee, said local officials backdated a document to July 7, hours after the disaster, that said they had introduced a state of emergency in advance of the flooding.

The early morning flooding from torrential rains in the Krasnodar region killed 153 in the town of Krymsk and its suburbs. Many of those who died were elderly residents unable to escape in time. Those who survived blamed local officials for failing to warn of the looming disaster.

Bastrykin, speaking at a meeting chaired by President Vladimir Putin in the Krasnodar region town of Gelendzhik, said local officials started receiving warning reports from meteorological services on July 5, more than a day before the disaster, but did not make any announcements at the time.

"There was no reaction on July 5. On July 6, at 8:15 p.m. the storm warning arrived, saying that there was a threat of flooding," Bastrykin said, Interfax reported. Several hours later, water was rushing through people's homes.

Witness accounts from some 2,000 people confirm that the emergency alert system didn't work, he said.

Krymsk Mayor Vladimir Ulanovsky, former head of the Krymsk district Vasily Krutko and Viktor Zhdanov, acting head of the district's emergency response department, were arrested over the weekend on charges of negligence leading to multiple deaths and, if tried and convicted, face up to seven years in prison and a ban on holding official positions for three years.

It was unclear whether new charges might be filed against them in connection with Bastrykin's allegations.

While visiting a sanatorium in Gelendzhik, Putin met with a group of expectant mothers and women with young children who had been evacuated from the flooded areas. He promised that they would have newly built homes by early November.

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