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A Death Foretold: World Made to Wait for Confirmation of Karimov's Death

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Conflicting reports on the condition of Uzbek President Islam Karimov created a picture of absurdity and confusion Friday.

Around 6 p.m. Moscow time, Interfax news agency reported that Tashkent had officially announced the death of the Central Asian strongman. Within 15 minutes, however, Interfax had retracted the statement. "Karimov did not die!," the agency wrote on Twitter.

Earlier in the day, Reuters news agency reported his death, citing three diplomatic sources. Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yildrim officially expressed his government's condolences to the Uzbek people in a broadcast on Turkish television.

A spokesman for Uzbekistan's government told RIA News Agency that no official announcement of his death had been made.

"At the present time, information of the President's death has not been released anywhere",

he said.

Speculation has surrounded Karimov’s condition since reports he was hospitalized with a brain hemorrhage last week. The Fergana.ru news outlet reported his death as early as Monday.

The official government position as late as Friday was that Karimov's health had only "sharply deteriorated."

Reports Friday also suggested preparations were underway for Karimov’s funeral in his home city of Samarkand, with central streets being cleaned and the cemetery where Karimov’s brothers and mother are buried also being prepared.

Samarkand’s international airport suspended scheduled flights for Saturday Aug. 3. Associated Press quoted Kyrgyz and Afghan officials as saying this will be the date of Karimov's funeral.

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