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Russian Regional Water Company Head Detained After 770 Poisoned

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Law enforcement has detained the head of Makhachkala's water system after 770 people were poisoned in the capital of Russia's southern republic of Dagestan after drinking local tap water.

Magomed Murtazaliev, general director of Makhachkalavodokanal, will likely be placed under arrest based on preliminary conclusions that his organization provided the city with water that did not meet sanitation standards.

"Consuming this water led to mass illness and many residents were treated in hospitals for acute intestinal infections," a press secretary for the regional branch of the Investigative Committee told the Interfax news agency.

Infections from consuming the water first began to appear on Oct. 27, according to Anna Popova, the head of Russia's consumer protection agency, Rospotrebnadzor.

“All patients are in a satisfactory condition, and there have been no [health] complications,” she told journalists after visiting patients in a local hospital on Oct. 30. “The recovery period is beginning very rapidly.”

Popova blamed the poisonings on inadequate chlorination in the water. She also suggested that recent torrential rains that rapidly overfilled the Myatlinsky water conduit played a role. On Oct. 31, Makhachkala instituted a regime of hyperchlorination for all water.

Currently 294 people — including 240 children — remain in the hospital.

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