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Evaporating Lake in Siberia Stirs Outcry Over Border With Kazakhstan

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Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) confirmed on Thursday that parts of Lake Sladkoe in southern Siberia had evaporated, silencing outcries the lake had been gifted to neighboring Kazakhstan.

"Residents were accustomed to the border being somewhere in the middle of the lake," a spokesman for Novosibirsk's FSB press service was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency. "But the lake has now dried out so much that the shore aligns with the [Kazakhstan] border."

Nestled on the Russian-Kazakh border in Novosibirsk's Kupinsky district, Lake Sladkoe straddles both countries.

Baffled by the lake's disappearance from Russian territory, the Kupinsky administration issued an official statement on Aug. 10 that read, "Lake Sladkoe is now in Kazakhstan."

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The disappearance was locally believed to be the result of a recent demarcation, the Kommersant newspaper reports. Residents nearby immediately took to social media to express their outrage. By Aug. 15 both local and state-run media outlets were reporting that Russia had gifted the lake to Kazakhstan.

The controversy was further stoked by comments made by head of the nearby village Pokrovka, Vladimir Shubnikov, regarding an "intentional" change the border running through Lake Sladkoe.

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By Tuesday night, however, Sergei Donskoi, Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology, denied that any change in the border had taken place.

Donskoi added that water levels at the lake would normalize later in the year. "[Lake Sladkoe] is not fed by waterways and depends entirely on weather conditions. The lake will return to its shores with the autumn precipitation."

The embassy of Kazakhstan also confirmed that the border remains in its original place, RIA Novosti reported.

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