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‘Putin’s Chef’ Compensates Victims of Caterer’s Mass Poisoning in Moscow

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Svetlana Kholyavchuk / TASS

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a catering magnate with ties to Vladimir Putin, has paid out compensation to the parents of dozens of children who were reportedly poisoned after eating food provided by his catering company.

Officials confirmed some 130 cases of food poisoning among kindergarteners in southeastern Moscow in December, leading parents to file a class-action lawsuit against the Concord catering firm. Anti-corruption investigators have tied the firm to Kremlin-linked catering magnate Yevgeny Prigozhin, 58. Concord has denied any links to Prigozhin.

Related article: Moscow Parents Sue Catering Firm of 'Putin's Chef' Over Mass Poisoning

Despite continuing to deny any links with Prigozhin, Concord’s press service said Friday that the magnate had paid 17.8 million rubles ($275,000) to 145 parents who had filed complaints after the food poisoning scandal.

“Yevgeny Viktorovich is ready to offer them financial assistance,” Concord’s press service wrote on its public page on Russia’s Vkontakte social media page.

A day earlier, Moscow’s consumer protection watchdog said that another catering company called Shkolnik, which is reportedly part of Concord’s corporate structure, had been fined in the case.

“The caterer [paid] over 2 million rubles, and an investigation is ongoing,” said Yelena Andreyeva, the head of the Rospotrebnadzor consumer watchdog’s Moscow branch.

The $30,900 payout effectively confirms that Concord is a “serious offender,” Lyubov Sobol, the anti-corruption activist who spearheaded the class-action lawsuit campaign, wrote.

“If Yevgeny Prigozhin’s company committed an administrative offense then why does it still hold state contracts to feed children?” she tweeted.

Prigozhin-linked companies have signed nearly 5,400 state contracts worth $3.2 billion with the military, schools and hospitals since 2011, the U.S.-funded Current Time news channel reported in February.

The United States has indicted three of Prigozhin’s entities, including Concord, over an alleged criminal and espionage conspiracy to tamper with the U.S. presidential election.

Prigozhin, also personally charged by the U.S. special prosecutor, has been dubbed "Putin's chef" by Russian media because his catering business had previously organized banquets for Putin.

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