

Russian Doctor Contaminated by Food, Not Nuclear Blast – Authorities

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

A Russian doctor found to have a radioactive isotope in his body after treating victims of an Aug. 8 rocket engine explosion had been contaminated by food and not radiation, authorities said Friday.

Earlier, The Moscow Times reported that a group of doctors who treated the radiation victims had been flown to Moscow for medical checkups. One of the doctors was reportedly found to have Cesium-137 — a radioactive isotope that is a byproduct of the nuclear fission of uranium-235 — in their muscle tissue.

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“Subthreshold” traces of Cesium-137 have been found in the unnamed doctor’s muscle tissue, the Arkhangelsk region’s administration [said](#) in a statement published on Friday.

“But specialists don’t associate this fact with [the doctor’s] participation in the incident relief effort” in the military town of Nyonoksa, it added.

The Health Ministry’s biomedical agency says Cesium-137 “tends to accumulate in fish, mushrooms, lichens and algae,” the Arkhangelsk region administration said.

“We can say with a fair degree of probability that it got into his body via food products which he’d eaten,” the administration added.

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Government officials have given a muted, occasionally contradictory response in the weeks since the accident killed at least five people and led to a brief radiation spike.

Russia’s state nuclear agency said the blast involved “isotope power sources” which it said came during a rocket test on a sea platform. President Vladimir Putin later said it occurred during testing of what he called promising new weapons systems.

Four of Russia’s nuclear radiation monitoring stations [went silent](#) days after the explosion, and doctors in the region have [said](#) they weren’t warned that they were treating patients exposed to radiation.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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