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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Says 'Unparalleled' Weapons Tested at Deadly Nuclear Accident Site

The Russian president told relatives of the five scientists killed in the August blast that their loved ones were conducting critical work.

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Lev Fedoseyev / TASS

President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that the scientists killed in a mysterious nuclear explosion in northwestern Russia this summer had been testing an "unparalleled" weapon.

A liquid propulsion system blast on Aug. 8 at a naval missile test facility in Nyonoksa in Arkhangelsk region killed five people and led to a brief radiation spike nearby. Putin said at the time the accident occurred during testing of what he called promising new weapons systems.

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“We’re talking about the most advanced and unparalleled technical ideas and solutions, about weapons designed to ensure Russia’s sovereignty and security for decades to come,” Putin told the victims’ relatives at a televised state awards ceremony in the Kremlin.

The scientists “were conducting the most complex, responsible and critically important work,” Putin said.

“The very fact of possessing these unique technologies is the most important reliable guarantee of peace on the planet today,” he added.

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Putin did not identify the weapons involved in the accident but vowed to continue improving them.

The secrecy surrounding the accident has led outside observers to suggest that the explosion involved the Burevestnik nuclear-powered intercontinental cruise missile, which Putin has said has unlimited range. NATO calls the missile the SSC-X-9 Skyfall.

Four of Russia’s nuclear radiation monitoring stations went silent days after the explosion, and doctors in the region said they weren’t warned that they were treating patients who had been exposed to radiation.

Reports later said the deadly explosion occurred during a mission to salvage a lost Burevestnik missile from a previous test.

Russia tested four of the missiles between November 2017 and February 2018, each resulting in a crash, the U.S. business outlet CNBC previously reported, citing unnamed sources.

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