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Russian Prisoners, Students and Military Will Be Commandeered to Produce Masks

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The Education Ministry, Defense Ministry and Rosgvardia (the National Guard) have been told to “provide conditions for the production of personal protective equipment." **Vladimir Smirnov / TASS**

Russian prisoners, students and military personnel will produce medical masks and other equipment as the country faces down the coronavirus pandemic, the RBC news website reported Tuesday.

The Federal Penitentiary Service has been ordered to have its inmates produce masks, RBC reported, citing an order from Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin that it has seen.

Russia has the world’s fourth-largest prison population, with nearly 520,000 inmates.

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The Education Ministry, Defense Ministry and Rosgvardia (the National Guard) have also been

instructed to “provide conditions for the production of personal protective equipment,” including masks and protective suits, Mishustin’s order reportedly said. RBC confirmed the document’s authenticity with a source in the National Guard.

“They should be producing protective gear on a daily basis, as indicated in the orders,” RBC reported.

Russia previously banned the export of medical masks, gloves, bandages and protective suits to prevent shortages as the coronavirus has continued to spread around the world.

Since Monday, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Russia has nearly doubled from 63 to 114.

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