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Russia Considers Postponing Annual WWII Parade Amid Coronavirus – Reports

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Russia marks Victory Day every May 9 with military parades and processions across the country, with Moscow's massive parade as the centerpiece of celebrations. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Russia could close to the public or reschedule its annual parade in Red Square that commemorates the Soviet victory in World War II due to the coronavirus pandemic, the RBC news website reported Thursday.

Russia marks Victory Day every May 9 with military parades and processions across the country, with Moscow's massive parade as the centerpiece of celebrations. President Vladimir Putin had invited a number of world leaders, including U.S. President Donald Trump, to attend Victory Day's 75th anniversary commemoration this year.

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The Kremlin and the Defense Ministry are debating holding the parade this fall or keeping it on May 9 but staging it without viewers, RBC cited three sources close to the Kremlin and the ministry as saying.

They are reportedly considering Sept. 2, when Japan formally surrendered to end the war in 1945, or Nov. 7, when Soviet troops marched through Red Square in 1941 to commemorate the Bolshevik Revolution, as alternative parade dates.

The Kremlin reiterated Wednesday that plans to hold the Victory Day parade on May 9 still remained unchanged.

"The situation is being monitored," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying.

A week earlier, Peskov said "the situation is forcing us to be flexible."

"Perhaps it would be needed to do everything so that, on the one hand, we pay tribute to the memory of our people and our country's heroism but, on the other hand, we don't endanger our people's health," he said.

Russia's World War II veterans and survivors, who, in their 80s and 90s, are at greater risk of severe health consequences from the virus than younger people, have continued to receive invites to gatherings across the country in recent weeks, The New York Times reported Saturday.

The coronavirus outbreak has infected 3,548 people and killed 30 in Russia, according to official data, with most cases centered in Moscow. The global toll stands at 936,000 infections and almost 47,300 deaths.

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