

Putin Postpones 75th Victory Day Parade Over Coronavirus

By [AFP](#)

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Before the pandemic, which has canceled large events worldwide, world leaders including France's Emmanuel Macron were expected to attend the parade that was set to include 15,000 troops and the latest missile systems. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

President Vladimir Putin on Thursday postponed a landmark military parade to mark the 75th anniversary of Soviet victory in World War II, as Russia struggles to contain the rapid spread of the coronavirus.

The "risks associated with the epidemic, whose peak has not passed yet, are extremely high," Putin said. "This does not give me the right to begin preparations for the parade and other mass events now."

He said the event would be held later in 2020.

Russia commemorates the Soviet Union's victory over the Nazis each year on May 9 with a

massive military display that sees thousands of troops and tanks parade through Red Square and military jets fly in formation over the capital.

This year's parade was meant to be a major showcase for Putin, with world leaders and veterans from all over Russia invited to watch and take part in events over four days.

Moscow had stopped short of postponing the parade as the number of coronavirus infections across the country grew, but the ambitious plans had seemed increasingly unrealistic in recent weeks.

The number of Russian coronavirus cases has been accelerating, with a new record increase of 3,448 infections reported Thursday.

There have been 27,938 cases of infections and 232 deaths, according to official figures, but the real number is believed to be higher.

Thursday's decision came a day after veterans groups urged the Kremlin to call off the event over concerns for health and safety.

A letter signed by the heads of three veterans' organizations urged Putin to "take a difficult but, as we see it, fair decision to hold the military parade on another date."

Related article: [Russian TV Airs 13M Names of Soviet WWII Casualties Ahead of 75th Victory Day](#)

The letter called on the Kremlin to hold the celebrations at a time when the parade would "not to be a threat, but a real celebration of peace and security for all its participants".

Fear of 'new wave' of cases

The organizer of a mass event on May 9 called the Immortal Regiment — in which marchers carry portraits of relatives who died in WWII — also asked participants to stay at home this year over coronavirus fears.

Sergei Lapenkov told the Echo of Moscow radio station that if thousands of people gathered in the streets it "could provoke a new wave of illnesses."

Before the pandemic, world leaders including France's Emmanuel Macron were expected to attend the military parade that was set to last 90 minutes and include 15,000 troops and the latest missile systems.

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