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# 400 Russian Cadets Infected With Coronavirus After Moscow V-Day Rehearsals – Proekt

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The last rehearsal for the parade took place on April 16, the day when Putin postponed the event and vowed to hold it later in 2020. **Anton Novoderezhkin / TASS**

At least 376 Russian cadets have been infected with the coronavirus after participating in rehearsals for the postponed Victory Day parade in Moscow's Red Square, the Proekt investigative website reported Monday.

Russia marked the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II with only military plane flyovers and a fireworks display Saturday. The last rehearsal for the parade took place on April 16, the day when Putin postponed the event and vowed to hold it later in 2020, an unnamed participant told Proekt.

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The virus broke out among officers and cadets in at least five elite Russian military academies and one regiment — out of the more than 40 involved — following the parade rehearsals, Proekt cited participants and their relatives as saying.

"That YouTube video filmed by bus drivers was true, my son told me," an unnamed mother of a naval infantry brigade soldier was quoted as saying, referring to unconfirmed footage of rehearsals outside Moscow which showed crowds of troops gathered in an apparent violation of social distancing guidelines.

The mother of a Defense Ministry Military University cadet said she believes that the officers played a bigger role in spreading Covid-19 than the rehearsals themselves. "Regular cadets have been [quarantined] since mid-March, but officers, cooks and teachers" could go in and out, she was quoted as saying.

Proekt said its efforts to investigate further were hampered by an order from Putin, which went into effect last Wednesday, that bans soldiers from sharing information with reporters.

Russia's military, which promised to quarantine everyone involved in the rehearsals last month following reports of infections among participants, says 1,132 cadets and 1,723 troops have tested positive for Covid-19 as of Sunday.

Russia commemorates the Soviet 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. Some 15,000 members of the military were expected to take part in this year's parade on Red Square.

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.

Russia has reported Europe's highest number of new cases over the past week with more than 10,000 new infections daily. As of Monday, 221,344 people have been infected nationwide — making Russia the third most-infected country in the world — and 2,009 have died from Covid-19.

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