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Russia Says Only 'Coronavirus Immune' Troops Will March at Victory Day Parade

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President Vladimir Putin ordered the military to hold the previously postponed Victory Day parade on June 24 as Russia appeared to stabilize its coronavirus outbreak. **Igor Ivanko / Moskva News Agency**

The Russian military will march asymptomatic troops and those who have developed immunity to coronavirus at its landmark parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory in World War II later this month, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Tuesday.

President Vladimir Putin ordered the military to hold the previously postponed Victory Day parade on June 24 as Russia appeared to stabilize its coronavirus outbreak. A report in May estimated that around 400 cadets had been infected with Covid-19 after participating in rehearsals for the postponed parade.

Related article: Putin Orders June 24 Victory Day Parade as Russia Flattens Virus Curve

Shoigu said that 14,000 troops will march across Red Square in Moscow and 50,000 more would march through 27 other cities that house military units to mark Victory Day.

“Mostly military personnel with immunity to Covid-19 and without signs of infectious diseases will be allowed in the parade,” Shoigu said at a Defense Ministry board meeting.

“I demand that contacts are eliminated between the parade crews and troops and civilians not involved in rehearsals,” he said.

The minister said 6,500 people in the Russian Armed Forces have been infected with coronavirus since March and added that recoveries have outpaced infections since May 9. The Russian military’s daily bulletin says almost 1,500 troops are currently being treated for or self-isolating with the coronavirus as of Monday.

Russia has also invited troops from 19 countries to march at the rescheduled Victory Day parade in Moscow, where Shoigu has vowed to enact safety measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The Moscow parade will last 1.5 hours and will re-enact elements of the first victory parade held on June 24, 1945, said Oleg Salyukov, commander-in-chief of the Ground Forces.

Before it was postponed, this year’s May 9 parade was meant to be a major showcase for Putin with world leaders and World War II veterans invited to watch and take part in events.

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