Russian Military Slams Foreign Anti-Vaccine 'Sabotage'

December 11, 2020

Sputnik V's developers have vowed to publish interim results soon amid compounding worries over safety and poor standards under the Kremlin's close watch. **Olga Maltseva / AFP**

A foreign-funded campaign is being waged to discredit Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday as the country prepares a mass immunization drive.

Spokesman Igor Konashenkov warned of "pseudo-analytical investigations" and "fake witness accounts" alleging the dangers of Sputnik V and mass refusals, including by Russian troops, to inoculate.

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"We know in detail the amount of funds and resources being thrown from abroad to discredit the domestic vaccine in the world and in Russia," Konashenkov said in a statement on the

Defense Ministry's website.

His warnings, which did not identify which countries were behind the alleged negative campaign, come as a President Vladimir Putin-ordered mass vaccination program gets underway later this week despite reports suggesting [scaling issues](#) for Sputnik V.

Expert analysis by Russia's state-run public health institute reportedly showed Sputnik V to be 96.2% [effective](#) after its second and final jab. Russian scientists have raised concerns this fall over the "ridiculous" race to vaccinate high-risk groups amid ongoing clinical trials and at the expense of scientific research standards.

"We're convinced that this informational sabotage will in no way weaken the high efficiency of Russian vaccines and certainly won't enhance the 'healing power' of foreign counterparts," Konashenkov said.

Around 120 paid Russian contract soldiers were [involved](#) in civilian and military studies of a frozen form of Sputnik V earlier this year. The vaccine is currently in Phase 3 trials involving 40,000 volunteers, with developers vowing to publish interim results soon amid compounding worries over safety and poor standards under the Kremlin's close watch.

More than 10,000 members of the Russian military have been vaccinated so far, with plans to inoculate 100,000 service members with Sputnik V by year's end, Konashenkov said. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, who himself received Sputnik V in September, [said](#) a total of over 400,000 military personnel are expected to be vaccinated.

The Defense Ministry [says](#) 4,100 soldiers have tested positive for Covid-19, more than half of whom are currently hospitalized. Over 20,000 service members have recovered and more than 76,500 taken off medical supervision since the start of the pandemic, it said.

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