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Russia's Excess Death Spike a 'Harsh Reality' of Coronavirus, Kremlin Says

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The state statistics service on Monday attributed 162,429 of deaths in 2020 to the coronavirus, three times more than initially reported by the national Covid-19 task force. **Yevgeny Sofiychuk / TASS**

Russia's surge in deaths last year is the "harsh reality" of the global coronavirus pandemic, the Kremlin said Wednesday after official data showed a much higher Covid-19 death toll than initially reported.

The state statistics service on Monday attributed 162,429 of deaths in 2020 to the coronavirus, three times more than the 57,555 deaths first reported by the national Covid-19 task force. That would bring Russia from eighth to fourth place among countries with the highest Covid-19 death tolls, undermining President Vladimir Putin's boasts that Russia has seen lower fatality rates than other countries.

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"Unfortunately, the excess mortality in 2020 appeared in nearly every country of the world

and it's at levels we wouldn't like to see," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"It's a harsh reality we, all countries of the world, face in the era of the pandemic," Interfax quoted Peskov as saying at a daily press briefing.

He acknowledged regional deficiencies in data-gathering but defended Russia's healthcare system as "very effective in proving its high-mobilization potential" during the pandemic.

"We responded adequately to the threat of coronavirus and continue to respond adequately. As for the incoming data from the regions: there could be peculiarities somewhere," Peskov said.

Rosstat, the federal statistics service, reported 323,000 excess deaths in 2020, the highest annual fatality count for at least 16 years.

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