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U.S. Diplomats Request Coronavirus Vaccine From Russia – Washington Post

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Russia has waged a massive PR campaign for Sputnik V, which critics call a geopolitical tool for the Kremlin, with around 30 countries authorizing its use. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

U.S. diplomats in Moscow have appealed for doses of the Russian-made Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine in the face of delivery shortages from Washington, The Washington Post reported Thursday.

Unnamed officials cited in the story say the "humbling" experience is prompted by Washington's inability to promise the delivery of U.S.-made vaccine doses in the near future. While the State Department has accepted at least 13 countries' offers to vaccinate U.S. officials serving abroad with their own supplies of U.S.-made jabs, officials based in Russia have had to turn to the Moscow-developed Sputnik V, the Washington Post reported.

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"Washington is prioritizing domestic workers, with no real plan for the rest of us, when they

all have access to U.S. health care," a senior diplomat was quoted as saying.

Russia's Foreign Ministry confirmed Friday that it had invited accredited foreign diplomatic missions to take part in the Sputnik V vaccination campaign, according to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow has not yet commented on the purported request for Sputnik V doses.

The State Department received 73,000 out of the 315,000 requested U.S.-made vaccine doses, according to the Post. The first two tranches have been reportedly distributed among U.S.-based officials as well as personnel in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Mexico, Turkmenistan and West Africa. The third allotment is said to be planned for U.S. missions in eastern and southern Africa.

Russia has waged a massive PR campaign for Sputnik V, which critics call a geopolitical tool for the Kremlin, with around 30 countries authorizing its use. The Lancet published a peer-reviewed study earlier in February finding Sputnik V more than 91% effective.

The State Department is not recommending its estimated 75,000 employees to take vaccines that have not yet received WHO or CDC approval, but is permitting them to "make their own health decisions," the Post reported.

Russia has the world's fourth-highest Covid-19 caseload and one of the world's highest excess death tolls, which is seen as the most reliable indicator of the human cost of the virus.

Sputnik V has become a contentious issue in Europe, where Russia is attempting to secure emergency use authorization. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen questioned Russia's slow vaccination campaign this week, getting an immediate rebuke from Moscow for "politicizing" the issue.

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