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Russia Accuses Brazil of 'Political' Sputnik V Rejection

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Moscow has previously accused the U.S. of politicizing coronavirus vaccines and of working to dissuade Brazil from approving Sputnik V. **Zoltan Mathe / AP / TASS**

The makers of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine on Tuesday have slammed Brazilian regulators' move to block imports of the jab, calling it a "political" decision.

Brazil's federal health regulator Anvisa on Monday denied a request from several states to import Sputnik V, saying it did not have the data needed to verify the jab's safety and efficacy.

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"Anvisa's delays in approving Sputnik V are, unfortunately, of a political nature and have nothing to do with access to information or science," the official Sputnik V Twitter account said in a Portuguese-language tweet.

Anvisa, which received a request last month for emergency use of the Russian formula, has

not released its findings, or cited the specific information it determined was lacking.

Moscow last month accused the United States of pressuring Brazil to reject Sputnik V after a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) report said officials had worked to dissuade Latin American countries from accepting aid from "ill-intentioned states" including Russia. An HHS spokesperson denied the report.

Sputnik V repeated this accusation Tuesday, saying "The United States Department of Health, in its 2020 annual report several months ago, publicly stated that the United States' health attaché 'persuaded Brazil to reject the Russian Covid-19 vaccine'."

The Kremlin said Tuesday it needed more information about the Brazilian decision before commenting, adding that it was not in touch with Brazilian authorities on the issue.

But in general, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: "We are against the use of vaccines as a political tool."

Sputnik V has been approved in 60 countries worldwide, including more than 10 in Latin and Central America, and is widely used in Argentina.

Peer-reviewed research published in The Lancet in January said the jab is safe and placed its effectiveness at 91.6%.

Brazil has recorded more than 390,000 Covid-19 deaths, the second-highest number globally, behind only the U.S. But the government has struggled to secure enough vaccine doses for the country's 212 million people.

Brazil's health ministry previously signed a contract to purchase 10 million Sputnik V doses to be delivered sometime between April and June, and several states have signed their own contracts to acquire more than 30 million doses. A Brazilian pharmaceutical company is also expected to manufacture Sputnik V through an earlier agreement later in 2021.

Includes reporting from AFP.

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