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Russian Kindergarteners to Stage 'Baby' WWII Victory Parade

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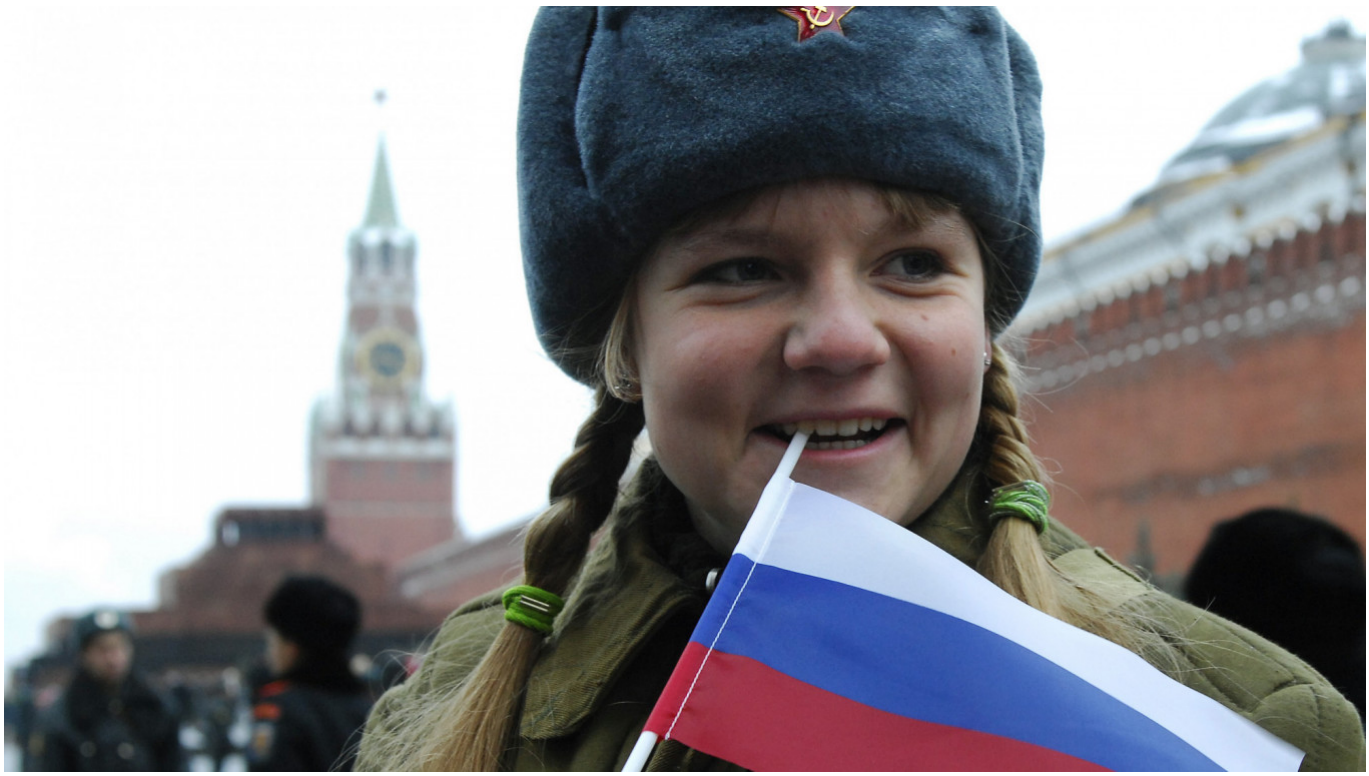

Russia in recent years has worked to promote patriotism and World War II remembrance among its youth through the media and military-patriotic education centers. **Valery Sharifulin / ITAR-TASS**

Updated at 4:09 p.m. on May 6 to add the event's postponement.

Russian kindergarteners in full military gear will march in a "baby parade" to mark Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II, authorities in a region near Moscow said in an announcement, which was later deleted.

The Tver region's Likhoslavsky district 200 kilometers north of Moscow said the parade will feature more than 100 children from local kindergartens. The kids will represent various branches of the Russian Armed Forces and brandish mock weapons "made by the skilled hands of kindergarten employees and parents."

While the event was originally scheduled for May 9, the day of Russia's Victory Day military parade, authorities told the Podyom Telegram channel that it has been postponed due to the local coronavirus situation.

“We received [federal consumer protection watchdog] Rospotrebnadzor's recommendations to wait for the epidemiological situation to improve. We'll just move it, maybe for District Day,” the district's press service said.

“It's possible to criticize us, but we are pursuing the goals that we need: patriotism and raising children,” it addded.

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The district's initial announcement noted Tuesday that “border guards, tankers, sailors, infantrymen, paratroopers and other Russian Army troops are actively preparing for the performance.”

“The baby troops will demonstrate marching drills and perform thematic dances with theatrical elements,” it added, inviting residents to attend.

The announcement was visible on the district website until Thursday afternoon.

The event, held on the day Russia marks the 76th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany, comes amid the country’s increasing militarization of its youth through education and the media.

Highlighting President Vladimir Putin’s efforts to cement patriotism as a unifying national idea, Russia’s school curriculum has recently been bolstered with war history, while state television in 2019 launched a youth-oriented channel with 24/7 World War II coverage.

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Putin in 2015 created a military-patriotic youth movement called the "Youth Army," while officials in recent years began sending delinquent juveniles to military-patriotic re-education camps.

These efforts have been accompanied by a growing number of reports showing Russian schoolchildren being taught marching drills and gun assembly skills.

“This will be a grand and unforgettable spectacle, which will further raise the degree of public patriotism, which is already at its highest level on this day,” the Likhoslavsky district’s administration said of the upcoming baby military parade.

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