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Russia's Orenburg Holds WWII Victory Parade Rehearsals Amid Flood Crisis

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orenburg.ru

Authorities in the southern Russian city of Orenburg announced that rehearsals for the annual Victory Day parade had started on Tuesday despite unprecedented floods submerging thousands of homes and forcing scores of residents to evacuate.

"Starting today, Orenburg garrison troops began training for the ceremonial passing of the parade troops dedicated to the 79th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War," the mayor's office said in a statement.

Russia refers to World War II as the Great Patriotic War, the end of which is celebrated as the country's most important public holiday each year on May 9.

Orenburg is just beginning to emerge from some of the worst flooding seen in almost a century after the nearby Ural River swelled to nearly 12 meters over the weekend. At least 12,000 houses in the city were flooded at the peak of the deluge, while 5,510 remained submerged as of early Tuesday.

Related article: 'Devastating to See': Russia's Orenburg Region Battles Historic Flood

While water levels in the city of 550,000 are gradually receding, local officials warned that rising waters in the Ural River's tributaries of Ilik and Sakmara threatened some neighborhoods in Orenburg and nearby settlements.

Still, the Orenburg mayor's office said it will go ahead with Victory Day parade rehearsals, which will feature military hardware and veterans of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"More than 700 servicemen, most of whom participated in the special military operation in Ukraine, are planning to take part in the festivities," the mayor's office said in the statement. "The mechanized column will be accompanied by... new air defense systems for the first time this year."

While authorities have not reported any deaths amid the devasting floods in the Orenburg region, independent journalists say they have been able to identify at least five flood victims in the cities of Orsk and Orenburg.

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