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Teenager Dies After Volunteering to Clean Up Oil Spill in Southern Russia – Reports

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A 17-year-old university student died in the southern resort town of Anapa, with pro-Kremlin media reporting that he was possibly exposed to toxic fumes during volunteer efforts to clean up the Black Sea oil spill.

Alexander Komin, a student at Anapa Industrial College, passed away overnight from unknown causes, the college confirmed Wednesday.

Pro-Kremlin Telegram news channels, without citing sources, reported that Komin had volunteered to clean oil from the beach on the day of his death. He was said to have suffered from chronic asthma, and forensic experts are allegedly investigating whether toxic fumes from the spill may have played a role in his death.

Komin's cousin later told local media that he did volunteer to clean up oil in Anapa but was

unsure whether he had done so with a group or by himself. According to the cousin, Komin was “healthy, wasn’t ill.”

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The Anapa Industrial College and Krasnodar region emergency response center denied that Komin was part of any organized volunteer group, stating that cleanup efforts strictly prohibit minors from volunteering.

“The college did not send any minors as volunteers. Their participation in cleaning the beaches is strictly prohibited,” the college said in a statement.

The oil spill began on Dec. 15, when two aging tankers carrying 9,200 metric tons of heavy fuel oil were damaged by a storm in the Black Sea. It has since polluted coastal areas in southern Russia’s Krasnodar region and the annexed Crimean peninsula, prompting authorities to declare an emergency.

President Vladimir Putin described the incident as Russia’s most serious environmental disaster in recent memory.

Nearly 8,500 people, including Emergency Situations Ministry staff and volunteers, are involved in the ongoing cleanup, according to the regional emergency response center.

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