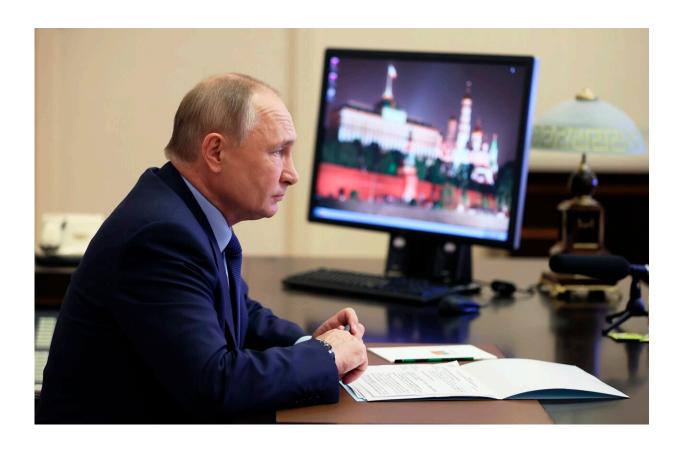# In Russia, 83% of COVID hospital beds are filled amid surge

November 10 2021, by Dasha Litvinova

Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a cabinet meeting via videoconference at the Novo-Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021. Credit: Mikhail Metzel, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP

Nearly 83% of hospital beds designated for COVID-19 patients are filled, Russian authorities said Wednesday, as daily tallies of new

infections and deaths remain at all-time highs.

Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova told a government meeting Wednesday that 82.8% of 301,500 hospital beds reserved for coronavirus patients were filled as of Tuesday morning.

"So far we can't confidently say that the situation has stabilized and the spread of infection has declined," Golikova, who runs the country's state coronavirus task force, told a government meeting Wednesday.

The task force registered yet another record for coronavirus deaths Wednesday—1,239, up from Tuesday's record of 1,211. Officials also reported 38,058 new infections. Around 40,000 cases and over 1,100 deaths have been registered every day since late October.

Russia's autumn surge in infections and deaths comes amid low vaccination rates, lax public attitudes toward taking precautions and the government's reluctance to toughen restrictions.

Less than 40% of Russia's nearly 146 million people have been fully vaccinated, even though Russia approved a domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine months before most countries.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered many Russians last month to stay off work between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7. He authorized regional governments to extend the number of non-working days if necessary, but only five Russian regions have done so.

Other regions have restricted access to restaurants, theaters and other public places only to those who have been fully vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 within the last six months or tested negative in the previous 72 hours.

It is yet to be seen whether the non-working period is paying off, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier this week.

On Tuesday, authorities in St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city and the second hardest-hit among Russian regions, made vaccinations mandatory for those older than 60 and those suffering from chronic illnesses. St. Petersburg residents that fall into either of the two categories must get their first shot before Dec. 15 and complete their vaccination before Jan. 15.

Russia currently has four domestically developed vaccines on offer, with Sputnik V and its one-dose version, Sputnik Light, being the dominant ones.

Sputnik V was approved last August with much fanfare at home and criticism abroad, because at the time it had only been tested on a few dozen people. But a study published in British medical journal *The Lancet* in February showed the Sputnik V is 91% effective and appears to prevent inoculated individuals from becoming severely ill with COVID-19.

Two other Russian vaccines, EpiVacCorona and CoviVac, have also received regulatory approval before completing late-stage trials experts say are necessary to ensure their safety and effectiveness in line with established scientific protocol. Developers of both are yet to release the results of these trials.

In total, Russia's state coronavirus task force has reported 8.9 million confirmed infections and 250,454 deaths—by far the highest death toll in Europe, which some experts believe to be a undercount.

Reports by Russia's own statistical service Rosstat, whcih tally coronavirus-linked deaths retroactively, reveal much higher mortality

numbers: 462,000 people with COVID-19 died between April 2020 and September this year.

Russian officials have said the task force only includes deaths for which COVID-19 was the main cause and uses data from medical facilities. Rosstat uses wider criteria for counting virus-related deaths and takes its numbers from civil registry offices where registering a death is finalized.

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