

Russian army starts mass coronavirus vaccination campaign

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Russia's military has started a mass coronavirus vaccination campaign which aims to inoculate more than 400,000 servicemen, Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu announced on Friday.

Shoigu said that over 2,500 soldiers had already been vaccinated, adding that by the end of the year the number is expected to reach 80,000.

Russia this week said that its Sputnik V [coronavirus](#) vaccine was 95 percent effective according to preliminary data—similar to other international vaccine makers that have also published test results showing efficacy rates of 90 percent and higher.

Sputnik V's developers have touted it as easier to store than some alternatives and at less than \$10 (8.38 euros) per dose the cheapest among frontrunners in a global race to develop a vaccine.

The Sputnik V vaccine—dubbed after the Soviet-era satellite—was registered in August and is currently undergoing its third and final stage of trials involving more than 40,000 volunteers.

Shoigu on Friday said that more than 400,000 servicemen of Russia's [armed forces](#) will be vaccinated against COVID-19 following an order from President Vladimir Putin.

The minister did not specify whether vaccination will be voluntary for soldiers, many of whom are drafted into the army for compulsory service.

He added that some 500 vaccinated servicemen with high levels of antibodies are involved in research of plasma treatment which has proven "effective in severe cases of the infection".

Russia's defence ministry was involved in the initial stages of developing Sputnik V and its servicemen were among the first volunteers to receive the jab during early stage trials.

Shoigu, 65, was himself among a number of top Russian officials who

received the [vaccine](#) earlier this year.

More than 4,100 servicemen have tested positive for coronavirus since the start of the pandemic in the spring, the [defence ministry](#) said on Wednesday.

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