Russian investigators probe big Black Sea oil spill

August 12 2021, by Vladimir Isachenkov

An aerial view of the Black Sea coast following an oil spill that happened while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker, near Novorossiysk, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Russian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe into an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared to be far bigger than initially thought. Authorities initially estimated the spill to cover only 200 square meters, but Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles). Credit: AP Photo
Russia's top criminal investigation agency on Thursday probed an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared hugely bigger than initially reported.

The spill occurred over the weekend at the oil terminal in Yuzhnaya Ozereyevka near the port of Novorossiysk that belongs to the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which pumps crude from Kazakhstan. The oil spilled while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker, which sails under the Greek flag.

Authorities initially estimated that the spill covered only about 200 square meters (2,153 square feet), but Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles).

WWF Russia has estimated that about 100 metric tons of oil have spilled into the sea.

The Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal investigation agency, said Thursday it was conducting a probe on charges of inflicting significant damage to marine biological resources. The committee said it performed searches at the Caspian Pipeline Consortium and inspected the area for damage.

Russian media said traces of oil were spotted along the scenic Black Sea coast, including Abrau-Dyurso and a dolphin aquarium in Bolshoy Utrish, 25 kilometers (15 miles) to the west, where workers urgently put up barriers to protect the mammals. The spill's oily film was also spotted in the resort city of Anapa, further west down the coast.
An aerial view of the Black Sea coast following an oil spill that happened while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker, near Novorossiysk, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Russian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe into an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared to be far bigger than initially thought. Authorities initially estimated the spill to cover only 200 square meters, but Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles). Credit: AP Photo
Two men rest on the beach as the Minerva Symphony tanker, which sails under
the Greek flag is seen at the Black Sea coast after an oil spill, near Novorossiysk,
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The Minerva Symphony tanker, which sails under the Greek flag is seen at the Black Sea coast after an oil spill, near Novorossiysk, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Russia's prosecutors have opened a criminal probe into an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared to be far bigger than initially expected. The oil spilled while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker. Authorities initially estimated the spill to cover only 200 square meters (2,153 square feet). But Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles). Credit: AP Photo
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An aerial view shows the Minerva Symphony tanker, which sails under the Greek flag in the background at the Black Sea coast after an oil spill, near Novorossiysk, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Russian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe into an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared to be far bigger than initially expected. The oil spilled while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker. Authorities initially estimated the spill to cover only 200 square meters (2,153 square feet). But Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles). Credit: AP Photo
A part of the Black Sea near a delphinium at a coast following an oil spill that happened while being pumped into the Minerva Symphony tanker, near Novorossiysk, Russia, Thursday, Aug. 12, 2021. Russian prosecutors have opened a criminal probe into an oil spill off the country's Black Sea coast that appeared to be far bigger than initially thought. Authorities initially estimated the spill to cover only 200 square meters, but Russian scientists said Wednesday after studying satellite images that it actually covered nearly 80 square kilometers (nearly 31 square miles). Credit: AP Photo

Veniamin Kondratyev, the governor of the Krasnodar region, sought to downplay the impact of the spill, saying that he and other officials flew over the area in a helicopter and saw no trace of it at sea. "Quick measures were taken to eliminate the consequences," Kondratyev said, according to the Interfax news agency.
The governor later met with the head of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, who assured him that the sea has remained clean thanks to quick efforts to contain the spill.

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Citation: Russian investigators probe big Black Sea oil spill (2021, August 12) retrieved 10 September 2023 from https://phys.org/news/2021-08-russian-probe-big-black-sea.html