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BIOBACTERIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY OF THE PENTAGON – A THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY IN EURASIA

Being an important factor of the existing international law system breakup, the USA biological warfare activity in the former Soviet republics and in the area of "Greater Eurasia" in general draws the attention of both specialists and wider public for quite a while. It is impossible to fully recognize current forms and methods of these activities, as well as possible negative consequences, without an understanding of the historical context of "biological wars". Thus, the USA cooperation with Japanese war criminals from the infamous "Unit 731" (created in 1932) during the Korean War was officially recognized in 1999, although the relevant documentation is not published after 20 years¹. Having a fairly long history², the biological warfare programs of the American army are based on a solid foundation of "public-private partnership", which organically combines the projection of geopolitical power and economic expansion in the interests of "private" contractors, closely connected with the structures of the military-industrial sector. So, at least with the tacit support of the CIA, militants associated with the terrorist network of opponents of the "Fidel Castro regime" brought the African plague virus to Cuba in 1971. This forced them to kill 500,000 infected animals in just a month and a half³. According to some experts, the recent widespread Ebola epidemic in Africa (2013) indicates a probable test of one of the promising types of a new biological weapon. Currently, in particular, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) supported programs for the spread of genetically modified viruses can be perceived as the development of biological agents and their means of delivery to enemy targets⁴. In American cinema, the dramatic thrillers *Outbreak* (*Outbreak*, 1995) and *Contagion* (*Contagion*, 2011) are known for promoting artistic images of a possible biological warfare.

These are just some examples of war crimes and covert operations under the guise of scientific researches and means of mass propaganda, which pose a real danger to countries which are explicitly or implicitly declared objects of destructive

1 Kaye, Jeffrey. Revealed: The long-suppressed official report on U.S. biowarfare in North Korea // <https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/the-long-suppressed-korean-war-report-on-u-s-use-of-biological-weapons-released-at-last-20d83f5cee54>

2 U.S. Army Activities in the U.S. Biological Warfare Programs, vol. I-II, 1977 // https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB58/RNCBW_USABWP.pdf

3 "CIA Link to Cuban Pig Virus Reported," reprinted from *Newsday* in *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 10, 1977 // <https://www.uky.edu/~rmfarl2/cubabiol.htm>

4 Reeves R. G., Voeneky S., Caetano-Anollés D., Beck F., Boëte C. Agricultural research, or a new bioweapon system? // *Science*. 2018. - 05 Oct. Vol. 362, Issue 6410, pp. 35-37.

"hybrid" impact and completely contrary to the international law. Being already imperfect enough, Geneva Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention⁵ (BTWC) could befall the fate of the Chemical Weapons Convention, other bilateral and multilateral documents that formed the framework of the international arms control system, from which Washington unilaterally withdrew. According to paragraph 19 of the "National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation",

*"There remains a risk of an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons, the proliferation and use of chemical weapons, as well as uncertainty about the facts of the possession of biological weapons by foreign countries and their potential for development and production of such weapons. The network of the U.S. military biological laboratories is expanding in the territories of the countries neighboring with Russia"*⁶.

Declaratively banning biological and toxin weapons, the BTWC does not provide a comprehensive regime for its non-proliferation. By the decision of the Fourth Review Conference in 1996, an Ad Hoc Group was formed, which received a mandate to conduct negotiations with a purpose of developing a legally binding document – a Protocol that defines a mechanism for verifying compliance with the BTWC. Washington rejected the draft Protocol on the grounds that it allegedly does not provide effective control and is contrary to the U.S. national interests. In addition, many countries that have signed the Convention have still not adopted domestic legislation on its implementation. More than half of the Member States ignore the obligation to provide annual information on their biological activities⁷. The last BTWC review conference, held in November 2016, was marked by minimal agreement

5 Full name: Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, concluded on December 16, 1971.// Conventions and agreements of the UN. Official website. URL: http://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/bacweap.shtml (reference date 2017/09/16).

6 Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 2015/12/31 N 683 "About the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation" // Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation. – 2016. – N1 (Part II), Art. 212.

7 See. Maltchikova V. U.S. biolaboratories in the CIS: the threat is growing // <http://vpoanalytics.com/2017/09/22/biolaboratorii-sshana-prostranstve-sng-ugroza-narastaet/>

7 See. Maltchikova V. U.S. biolaboratories in the CIS: the threat is growing // <http://vpoanalytics.com/2017/09/22/biolaboratorii-sshana-prostranstve-sng-ugroza-narastaet/>

with the outcome document and the absence of a substantive work plan until the next event in 2021⁸. The lack of a mandatory mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the BTWC is, unfortunately, a trivial thing.

"I mentioned how they are trying to make the universal instrument of the international law – the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – an obedient instrument for promoting Western politics by, in fact, invading the prerogatives of the UN Security Council. Something similar can happen to the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons, which has been accepted, ratified and entered into force for many years, but we cannot do it together with a number of other countries that act responsibly for the biological issue and the problems of non-proliferation of biological weapons, its destruction, we can't achieve the creation of a mechanism for verifying this convention, verifying how the member states of this convention comply with their obligations", –

– Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov said in November 2018⁹. The position of American partners, who consistently block all the proposals for the formation of an appropriate organizational structure, is the main reason why it has not been possible to take pathways to the creation of such a mechanism since 2001.

"In addition to the increasing risk of bioagents being got to terrorists, to the groups that pursue aims of unlawful nature ..., unfortunately, we have recently been observing a certain tendency to erode universally recognized, generally accepted norms and mechanisms in the field of arms control and non-proliferation of weapons", –

– the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Ryabkov noted during the II International Conference "Global threats to biological safety: problems and solutions". According to him, Washington follows deliberate lines to break the current international legal system in this sensitive area. Once again, the diplomat drew attention to the fact that *"active biomedical activities, which raise our concerns and questions, including those within the context of the convention on biological and toxin*

weapons, are being carried out outside the national territory, involving the participation of the U.S. government agencies". At the same time, "strange, if not absurd look the attempts of our American colleagues to block the resumption of negotiations on the verification mechanism, but, in the meantime, to get one-sided access to foreign microbiological objects of interest to them about which they are not tired to disseminate information that is, in our opinion, not true"¹⁰.

The ongoing expansion of the biological warfare infrastructure of the Pentagon, covering 25 countries already, its steady approach to the borders of Russia, as well as Iran and China, nullifies propaganda claims about the "humanitarian focus" of the classified activities of microbiologists and doctors in uniform dealing with causative agents of especially dangerous infections. The "laboratory of a high level of biological isolation" created in the Alekseevka settlement near Tbilisi is usually cited as one example of this kind of destructive activity. However, this is only one of dozens of such examples. The formal transfer of this American military facility to the jurisdiction of the Georgian authorities does not fundamentally change anything.

Legal acts in force and newly adopted by the American legislator run counter to the country's international obligations, at which the current administration looks back fewer and farther between. As noted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,

"...this includes, in particular, the reservation to the Geneva Protocol of 1925 regarding the right of use of chemical and toxin weapons in response, and order of the U.S. President No. 11850, which allows the U.S. armed forces to use non-lethal chemical and toxin weapons as a means of warfare. A particularly outrageous is the use of the so-called Patriotic Act of 2001, which essentially allows the development of biological weapons with the consent of the U.S. government. This document, in its "biological" part, in our opinion, should be immediately canceled"¹¹.

A few years ago, the Director of the Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Ulyanov, pointed at gross violations of the

8 Korzun, Peter. U.S. Biological Warfare Program in the Spotlight Again // <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2018/09/13/us-biological-warfare-program-in-spotlight-again/>

9 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention may suffer the fate of CWC, Lavrov said // <https://ria.ru/20181121/1533227371.html>

10 The USA have a hypocritical position in the field of biological weapons, Ryabkov said // <https://ria.ru/20190620/1555731623.html>

11 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: global society worries about the Pentagon microbiological activity // <https://tass.ru/politika/3210061>



requirements in the field of handling, production and transmission of causative agents of especially dangerous infections by the American side, even on their own territory, including the practice of sending out anthrax spores for many years. Multiple distribution of a viable causative agent of anthrax to 194 recipients in ten countries of the world became the most egregious incident carried out by a test center of the U.S. Army (Dugway proving ground, Utah) in 2005-2015. According to Russian specialized experts, a "live" recipe, prepared in a proper way, was sent deliberately to at least one state – the Republic of Korea – as part of testing a system for a comprehensive assessment of the biological situation. Adequate infrastructure, known as the JUPITR (Joint United States Forces Korea Portal and Integrated Threat Recognition), is being deployed at the US Osan airbase and other Washington military facilities under the pretext of a response to "the possibility of using biological weapons by one of the neighboring countries"¹². In total, deadly viruses were sent 195 times to 12 states around the world, resulting in the fact that

"...mortal danger of infection exposed not only to the U.S. citizens who did not know anything, but also to the population of other countries. The extent of these violations, including the real purpose of the "production facilities" of the U.S. Department of Defense, which have cultured spores, as well as the true purposes of sending them abroad to the American military facilities, remains unclear"¹³.

In October 2015, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev noted that the number of laboratories in the territory of the CIS countries increased twenty times under the control of the U.S.; at the same time, tens of billions of dollars are allocated for the creation of military biological weapons¹⁴. The mere fact of supporting and financing the activities of foreign reference laboratories by the Pentagon and its structural units (such as the Defence Threat Reduction Agency, DTRA) is the basis for suspecting violations of the most important prohibition established by the 1971 mentioned Convention, in particular – the implementation of activities for military purposes. It is a case of responsibility to never, under any circumstances, develop, produce, accumulate, acquire in any other way, and not preserve microbiological or other biological agents or toxins, whatever their origin

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: the U.S. biosafety situation raises concerns // <https://ria.ru/20160210/1372395765.html>

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation: global society worries about the Pentagon microbiological activity // <https://tass.ru/politika/3210061>

¹⁴ Patrushev announced the U.S. bio-weapons laboratories in the CIS // <https://ria.ru/20151030/1310792210.html>

or production method is (Paragraph 1, Article I). This prohibition applies to microbiological and other biological agents and toxins, as well as their quantities not intended for preventive, protective or other peaceful purposes (Paragraph 1, Article I). In addition, the prohibition applies to weapons, equipment or means of delivery intended for the use of such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflicts (Paragraph 2, Article I). The Convention directs states to cooperate exclusively for peaceful purposes, imposing the obligation on them, whenever possible, to cooperate in assisting, individually or together with other states or international organizations, to further develop and apply scientific discoveries in the field of bacteriology (biology) to prevent diseases or to other peaceful purposes (Art. X)¹⁵.

Meanwhile, back in the late 1980s, the U.S. Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center started actively to collect and analyse information about microbiological researches in the Third World countries, the number of which has organically replenished in the former Soviet republics since 1991¹⁶. And while experiments on their own citizens can be at least somehow considered the prerogative of the national authorities, some experts characterize the military-microbiological activity along the perimeter of Russia's borders as a "biological" analogue of the so-called "missile defense" systems, which are by no means only "defensive".

This activity is most advanced in Georgia and also in Ukraine, where the elites, more than others from among the former Soviet republics, have advanced in the service of the military and political interests of the "Western nations". The formal reference point for the cooperation between Tbilisi and Washington was the signing of the Agreement "On cooperation in the field of technologies and pathogens associated with the development of biological weapons and the non-dissemination of information in this area" in 2002 (under Eduard Shevardnadze). In August 2005, a bilateral Georgian-American agreement was signed on the implementation of the Nunn-Lugar program, named after the American senators – the authors of the project. According to information in the press, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan transferred their collections of dangerous disease agents to the United States in exchange for the American assistance, ignoring Moscow's concern. In addition, in the case of Azerbaijan, when Baku transferred more than 60 samples of dangerous

¹⁵ Hayrapetyan A. Legislative Change of the US Military Biological Laboratories // <http://vpoanalytics.com/2017/10/26/pravovoe-izmerenie-deyatelnosti-voennyh-biolaboratorij-ssha/>

¹⁶ By 1991, the USSR had a powerful scientific and industrial military-biological complex, which, according to some authors, was managed by the secret "empire" "Biopreparat".

bacteria to the U.S. Walter Reed Army Medical Center in 2005, it was mediated, along with Richard Lugar, by senator Barack Obama, who later on, as the president of the United States, continued to fund the Pentagon's related programs¹⁷. Apart from military biological research practice without reference to the American public opinion and virtually nonexistent international law, what is meant here is the artificial removal of pathogens aimed at defeating a specific genotype, animal world or population of a certain territory (for example, on ethnic grounds)¹⁸.

Negative experience of Ukraine is not least to illustrate the potential dangers of such experiments. Public opinion stably links periodic outbreaks of strange diseases in various regions¹⁹ with the operation of nearby high-security facilities. The most famous is the activity of American biologists in the city of Merefa near Kharkov, where they unfolded in full force after the coup in Kiev in 2014²⁰. Under President Viktor Yushchenko, bilateral documents on cooperation in the bio-bacteriological sphere, accompanied by numerous scandals, were signed by the Pentagon on the American side, while the Ukrainian side was signed by the Ministry of Health²¹. The parties have moved so far that, quite possibly, *"the population of Ukraine has been turned into experimental animals that are exposed to a virus or some kind of bacterium and, with the help of a network of controlled laboratories, they study its effect on the Slavic genotype"*²². In November 2015, in Kherson, local media suspected the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service of hiding information about the Pentagon's involvement in the construction of a laboratory of especially dangerous infections in the city center, which was created to accumulate and store biological substances that can be used to create biological weapons²³.

¹⁷ Popov D. The Pentagon needs a biological laboratory in Kazakhstan – what for? // <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2013/12/25/zachem-pentagonu-biologicheskaja-laboratoria-v-kazahstane-24822.html>

¹⁸ Ib.

¹⁹ Pentagon Setting Biological Bombs Against Europe? // <https://orientalreview.org/2017/08/21/pentagon-setting-biological-bombs-europe/>

²⁰ Modern Military Biology: American View // <https://ria.ru/20140918/1024618726.html>

²¹ Agreement between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine Concerning Cooperation in the Area of Prevention of Proliferation of Technology, Pathogens and Expertise that could be Used in the Development of Biological Weapons // <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/95251.pdf>

²² Vlyadkin O. Evil range. Ukraine gets ready to experience biological weapons // Independent Military Review. – 2016. – April 22.

²³ A scandal erupted around the Pentagon's laboratory for the creation of biological weapons in Kherson // <https://www.politnavigator.net/v-kherson-e-razgorelysa-skandal-vokrug-postroennoj-v-gorode-laboratorii-pentagona-po-sozdaniyu-biologicheskogo-oruzhiya.html>



The problem ceases to be purely local in nature, taking into account the alleviated activity of the extremist terrorist groups connected with foreign special services in the territories bordering Crimea²⁴. In addition to the obvious risks of a military-political and sanitary-epidemiological nature, we are talking about the difficulty of attracting foreign (including non-Western) investments and modern technologies into the country, since they become risky for the health of the investors and employees of trade companies²⁵.

Significant financing of developments in the field of molecular biology and medicine, fundamental and applied biotechnologies, and the growth of relevant costs can hardly be considered in isolation from the current foreign policy tasks of individual states as well as cross-border subjects of foreign policy action, including international associations, private military campaigns, or terrorist groupings. There were references in the Russian press, even during the second Chechen campaign, about the presence of elements of bacteriological weapons in illegal armed groups operating in the North Caucasus. Aforementioned "random" anthrax spores indicate to

the fact that the danger remains fully²⁶.

In October 2017, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin drew attention to the important fact that

*"...biological material is being collected throughout the country, and for different ethnic groups and people living in different geographical parts of the Russian Federation ... They do it purposefully and professionally. We are such an object of very great interest"*²⁷.

The information appeared earlier in the media about the Pentagon's intention to purchase samples of ribonucleic acid (RNA) of Russians of the Caucasian race. The appropriate tender has been posted on the government procurement website (the customer is the U.S. Air Education and Training Command, AETC). The military department needed samples of RNA molecules involved in the transfer of human genetic information, and synovial fluid, which provides joint mobility. According to the assessment of the military expert and former member of the UN biological weapons commission Igor Nikulin,

²⁴ So, during the long-term armed conflict in Syria, international militants operating on the territory of the country received chemical warfare agents from Turkey, which actively supports the so-called "Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people" banned in Russia - see: A Turkish member of Parliament: IS militants in Syria received sarin from Turkey // <https://russian.rt.com/article/136536>

²⁵ Tchitchkin A. "Sanitary" oversea-style viruses cordon // <https://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--2015-11-04--sanitarnyj-kordon-iz-virusov-po-paokoekanski-20389>

²⁶ At one time, the Turkish press wrote that more than 200 Western firms sold technology and components for the production of chemical and bacteriological weapons, as well as the means of their delivery to "Saddam" Iraq, thereby openly violating the aforementioned Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and undermining its non-proliferation regime. And this is far from the only example of this kind.

²⁷ Meeting of the Council for Civil Society and Human Rights // <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55947>

"The USA are trying to develop various types of biological weapons exactly for specific genepool carriers, and Caucasians are needed as they make up the majority of the population of our country. This is the very focus-group to which they are trying to pick up the keys. It is necessary for the viruses to influence selectively one or another national group. Partially this problem was solved by the American program called "The Human Genome project". It was also significantly financed by the Pentagon"²⁸.

And this opinion is hardly the only one.

"If someone intends to transfer the war to the plane of genetics and influence the enemy at the cellular level, collecting biomaterials can result in enormous losses for the opposite side. Indeed, biological warfare is not only the spread of viruses and infections: exposure to individual human cells can also have a tremendous effect! At the same time, this is the most villainous invention, which, of course, should be prohibited on a par with chemical weapons. I believe that the statement of our President should be a serious warning to the Americans";

– retired Major General [Note: U.S. Army equivalent: Brigadier General] of Russian FSS Aleksandr Mikhailov believes²⁹.

The current situation is forcing the Russian side to take retaliatory measures aimed at protecting the national territory, population, industrial and agricultural facilities from the whole complex of threats of cross-border origin, especially within the framework of the current "National System of Chemical and Biological Safety of the Russian Federation", including relevant organizational measures aimed at ensuring the biological safety of the country and the prevention of existing risks. According to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated March 11, 2019 No. 97 "On the Fundamentals of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the field of ensuring chemical and biological safety for the period up to 2025 and beyond"³⁰, the Security Council of the Russian Federation is to perform the formation of a state policy in the field of ensuring chemical and biological safety and monitoring its implementation. The main biological threats to Russia's security include modification of the properties and forms

²⁸ Military concern: the U.S. Air Force wants to purchase samples of living tissue of the Russians // <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/413080-voennyye-ssh-a-obrazcy-rnk-rossiyan>

²⁹ Koshkin R. The threat of usage of chemical and biological weapons // Strategic priorities. - 2018. - № 2. P. 25-39.

³⁰ Official Internet Portal of Legal Information (www.pravo.gov.ru) dated 2019/03/1, Art. 0001201903110045

of pathogenic biological agents and the properties of their carriers; design and creation of pathogens with the help of synthetic biology technologies; terrorist attacks associated with the use of hazardous biological substances. The "analysis of the threats of terrorist acts using chemicals and dangerous biological agents, including those created on the basis of the latest achievements in the field of genomics, proteomics, genetic engineering, organic and inorganic chemistry" is one of the tasks of the state policy in the field of chemical and biological safety in terms of monitoring the relevant risks. Another task is "to conduct monitoring of chemical and biological risks in the territory of the Russian Federation, ensuring prompt response to biological and chemical emergencies, organizing the functioning of reference centers and a national center for monitoring biological and chemical threats".

In the foreign policy direction, negotiations are conducted with some member states on the Collective Security Treaty Organization with a view to signing agreements that adequately guarantee the transparent nature of the activities of the respective facilities built with external financial support. One way to at least partially strengthen the BTWC could be signing of legally binding protocols with some of its participants. The intensification of significantly reduced in recent decades scientific contacts between Russian biomedical institutions and colleagues from the countries of the "near" and "far" abroad may be equally important. We should not forget about the positive experience, such as the creation of the Soviet-Vietnamese Tropical Research and Technology Center (now the Russian-Vietnamese Tropical Research and Technology Center) in 1987. One of the activities of this scientific institution is the study of the consequences of the U.S. war in Vietnam, the elaboration of measures to eliminate them and improve biological systems, as well as the study of especially dangerous infections³¹.

³¹ Bobrov V. Russian-Vietnamese tropical center celebrates 30 years. A brief overview of Vietnamese terrestrial ecosystem biodiversity research // Social and environmental technologies. 2017. - № 2. - P. 104-121.

The authors of this report, based on the open sources, consider the situation in the field of biosafety in the context of the activities of the network of "reference laboratories" in Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and other states that formed after 1991 on the site of the Soviet Union. The evolution of a foreign military-biological presence in the former Soviet republics, its organizational and legal mechanisms, including mimicry attempts under allegedly "civilian tasks", is traced. Considerable attention is paid to the negative consequences of the activities of biological laboratories for their countries of residence, causing reasonable concern from the professional community, civil society structures, independent foreign journalists and researchers³².

32 See, E.g.: "All Georgia is a walking laboratory" - revelations of Saakashvili ex-adviser // <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/interview/20180921/242189913/Vsya-Gruziya--khodyachaya-laboratoriya---otkroveniya-eks-sovetnika-Saakashvili.html>; Gaytandzhieva, Diana. The Pentagon Bio-Weapons // <https://maps.southfront.org/pentagon-bio-weapons/>; Lompar, Goran. U.S. Military Bio-labs in Ukraine, Production of Bio-weapons and "Disease Causing Agents" // <https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-military-bio-labs-in-ukraine-production-of-bio-weapons-and-disease-causing-agents/5605307>; Freeman, Makia. Bioweapons: Lyme Disease, Weaponized Ticks // <https://www.globalresearch.ca/bioweapons-lyme-disease-weaponized-ticks/5685429>; Korzun, Peter. International Team of Researchers Concerned Over US Efforts to Create Bio-Weapons // <https://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2018/10/08/international-team-researchers-concerned-over-us-efforts-create-bio-weapons/>

LUGAR BIO LABORATORY IN GEORGIA — THREAT TO REGIONAL SECURITY

The USA continue to implement their development program for the network of so-called reference medical laboratories (bio laboratories) in the former Soviet republics, primarily in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine.

At the end of May this year, with the support of the American diplomatic mission in Tbilisi, the U.S. Center for Disease Control conducted comprehensive trainings within framework of the targeted training program for epidemiology specialties. The event was attended by about 130 people from among the citizens of above-mentioned countries.

The declared goal of the program is to create necessary conditions for preventive response and localization of dangerous diseases hotbeds.

Most participants of trainings are current employees for the national Ministries of Public Health and Agriculture, as well as of the local bio laboratories.

Richard Lugar Centre for Public Health Research ("Lugar Lab", Alekseevka settlement) has been functioning in Georgia since 2011. It is in the interests of the U.S. Department of Defense, that the Laboratory conducts programs and bio experiments on dangerous viruses and bacteria, its effect on humans, as well as animals and plants typical for the Caucasian region.

The Laboratory complex is officially included into DoD Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System – GEIS, it is also a part of DTRA project.

The Laboratory is located on the territory of the military airfield supply complex in the Alekseevka settlement, 15 km East of Tbilisi. The town is connected with the settlement by railway and highway. The total area of laboratory premises exceeds 8 thousand square meters, while its 2.5 thousand square meters are occupied by two Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratories intended for the study of pathogens and diagnosis of human and animal infections.

The laboratories are modernly equipped and have their own production of nutrient media, vivarium, intended for the maintenance of small and medium-sized animals, as well as primates. The complex is characterized by high seismic resistance, it is able to withstand earthquakes of magnitude up to 9 points on the Richter scale.

In accordance with the general objectives of the facilities that make up the GEIS system, the "Lugar Lab" is meant to provide reliable storage and maintenance of pathogens collections, as well as

monitoring of sanitary and epidemiological situation, conducting military medical intelligence on the territory of Georgia and neighboring countries, rapid diagnosis of infectious agents and response to their outbreaks.

The U.S. consider it very important to establish worldwide recognition of the Laboratory Complex as of the most significant scientific organization among former Soviet republics, providing necessary conditions for its further active use for the benefit of Pentagon under international approval. For this purpose, cooperation with the World Health Organization is being intensified. Thus, it was announced about the accreditation of 3 virological laboratories, which are working with pathogens of such diseases as poliomyelitis, influenza, measles, rubella, etc.

In June 2014 the "Lugar Lab" was assigned to the Georgian side and was then included into National Center for Disease Control and Public Health – NCDC, under the name of which the results of the open scientific works were officially reported and published.

The USA organize trainings for the Georgian specialists, allocate grants for biological and expeditionary research (for example, making distributions maps for tularemia and anthrax, studying the migration of disease vectors).

Such major U.S. biological warfare institutes as USAMRIID, WRAIR and NMRC are claimed to be partners for the Georgian scientists within grant programs.

Along with the "Lugar Lab", the Georgian system of sanitary and epidemiological surveillance includes 11 laboratories within the structure of the Ministry of Health, and 11 more subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture. Among them there are regional stations of sanitary supervision and disease control in cities of Batumi, Gori, Gurjaani, Dusheti, Kutaisi, Marneuli, Poti, Rustavi and Onaria village in Zugdidi district. In order to cover the U.S. interests, the facilities of this network legally belong to Georgia, while most of the work is carried out by staff from the local population under the guidance of the group of 15-20 experienced American epidemiologists.

The main objectives of this research center are: to establish comprehensive control over the sanitary and epidemiological situation in the Russian regions near Georgian borders, as well as in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; to collect samples of highly pathogenic strains of infectious diseases of humans, animals and

plants from local natural foci; to study the peculiarities of the infectious process and the mechanisms of immune development among Russian citizens; to conduct tests of innovative medications on ethnically heterogeneous local population.

In addition, the task of the "Lugar Lab" is to collect information about the level of development of biological security systems in Russia, especially in the North Caucasus region, in other countries bordering Georgia, their ability to withstand epidemics and bioterror attacks, to gain access to research results of the leading Russian experts in this field.

The main consumers of the received data and biological samples are such American military organizations as Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, U.S. Naval Medical Research Center, etc.

Cooperation in the biomedical field has been developing between Georgia and USA since the late 1990s. The main work is carried out within the framework of the Cooperative Biological Engagement Program, which is supervised by the Threat Reduction Agency within the U.S. Department of Defense. The official objective of the program is to reduce biological risks on the territory of Georgia by establishing a network of modern laboratories, deploying systems for the collection, analysis and storage of biomaterials, conducting joint research and expanding international scientific relations.

The Georgian and American scientists from the Eliava Institute of Bacteriophages, Microbiology and Virology (IBMV) and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research conducted a joint study of the main mechanisms of coevolution of the phage (parasite) and the host cell on the basis of the laboratory. In the course of this work, experiments were carried out with pathogens of plague, anthrax and brucellosis.

The "Lugar Lab" allows Washington to solve wide range of tasks which impose regional safety under threat. Despite of the Americans' declaration of the civilian purpose of the above mentioned biological center, there is a distinct "dual focus" of its operation.

Following factors point that out:

1. All the facilities of the "Lugar Lab" have been built and provided with highly expensive biotechnological equipment at the expense of the U.S. Department of Defense. Construction expenses in Georgia amount to 150 million dollars, which far exceeds the expenses for construction of similar civil facilities and proves its major importance for Washington.

2. Being the facility of the American biological warfare infrastructure in Georgia, the Lugar Laboratory is the part of the Global Emerging Infections Surveillance (GEIS). Within GEIS program,

the Laboratory collects and analyzes information on the spread of infectious diseases in the regions of U.S. interest, establishes cooperation with local research organizations, provides advisory support and practical assistance in the organization of research, as well as the selection and export of appropriate samples of biopathogens to USA. It is an American Military Agency that defines the goals, objectives of research being the recipient of all the materials of the work.

3. The activities of the biological center are carried out behind closed doors, and the official leaders are appointed from among military or intelligence officers loyal to Washington. In particular, the "Lugar Lab" was headed by Ms. A. Zhvania, the ex-head of the Georgian Intelligence.

4. On the territory of the laboratory complex there are restricted access rooms, where access is allowed only to the American specialists.

5. The laboratory received high and the highest degree of Biosafety Level (BSL-3, BSL-4), which allows to conduct research with pathogens of highly infectious diseases (including variola viruses, cow pox, fevers of Marburg, Ebola, Lassa, Junin, Machupo, Dengue) and other potential biological threat agents.

6. On a regular basis, the representatives of the American side carry out training of highly qualified specialists for this laboratory in the field of epidemiology, virology, molecular biology, biotechnology, diagnosis of highly infectious diseases on the basis of military medical institutions of the United States.

The activity of the "Lugar Lab" causes dissatisfaction of local residents in connection with periodically recorded outbreaks of infectious diseases (gastrointestinal tract, skin rashes, ARVI, etc.), which were caused, according to experts, because of currently developed samples of biological weapons.

Attempts of activists of ecological movements and citizens living in the settlement to organize protest actions repeatedly led to their dispersal and application of measures of administrative influence.

Moreover, the staff of the laboratory periodically carries out patenting for the offensive and subversive means of waging bacteriological warfare (pilotless aerial vehicle for spreading infested insects in the air, spraying of chemical and biological substances; toxic ammunition for sabotage operations with the possibility of applying capsules containing different viruses).

Thanks to the efforts of the independent Georgian, Russian and European journalists as well as public activists, the "secret" activities of the Richard Lugar laboratory in early 2019 were widely highlighted

in local and international media, which caused a significant resonance and forced official Tbilisi to make public comments on this issue. However, according to officials, the functioning of the medical institution does not pose any threat and is carried out in accordance with national legislation. The Georgian MFA joined to solve the "problem", its authorities declared its readiness, as an "act of goodwill", to open full access for international (including Russian) experts and journalists to most of the premises, except for those where the most dangerous strains of viruses are stored.

At the same time, the position of the foreign policy establishment of Georgia has not received any development, apparently its main goal was to "extinguish" the resonance, which generally was achieved.

The only country that still insists on the need for the international control over the activities of the biolaboratory is Russia. However, at present, the Georgian side nullified consultations on this issue, referring to the presence of "disagreements" in the bilateral agenda (anti-Russian protests in Georgia, the ban on air traffic and restrictions in the tourism industry).

NETWORK OF PENTAGON BIOLABORATORIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA: DISASTER WAITING TO HAPPEN

Being one of the leaders of the Soviet microbiological science, Armenia had considerable potential for research of highly dangerous microorganisms and methods to combat them. After its transfer to a new research and production complex in Abovyan in 1972, the Institute of Microbiology of Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR became one of the major centers of general and applied microbiology in the USSR. Experience in the design, construction and installation works and operation of microbial factories in Armenia was of significant importance for the development of industrial production, in particular, bacterial insecticides. In 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Institute Director Evrik Afrikyan founded the Center for Microbiology and Microbial Depository, which is a national collection of cultures of non-pathogenic microorganisms of scientific and industrial importance¹.

In 2010, Scientific and Production Center "Armbiotechnology" NAS RA was founded in the legal form of state non-profit organization. It was set up based on the CJSC "SRI Biotechnology" and Center of Microbiology and Microbial Depository NAS².

In the post-Soviet period, U.S., UK and several other countries became increasingly interested in scientific and personnel potential of the republic including the intention to gain access to the storage of microorganism cultures (about 14,000 strains of scientific and production values). Equally important were the developments aimed at identifying and combating the spread of especially dangerous infections (plague, tularemia, anthrax, encephalitis, FMD, ASF, etc.) in the Caucasus region and the implementation of appropriate sanitary-epidemiological measures. U.S. military experts invited the experts from the Microbial Depository Center to examine microbe materials produced by the Pentagon in Iraq for the presence of anthrax. Also upon the initiative of American partners, the management of the Center were invited to participate in the NATO project (with the assistance of Germany and Georgia) to determine the genotypes of anthrax and plague. Based on the partnership agreement with the company "Pioneer", which is a part of the corporation "DuPont", research on the entomopathogenic bacteria was carried out³.

1 Evrik Gegamovich Afrikyan // http://www.armic.am/modules.php?name=News&file=view&news_id=259

2 Scientific and Production Center Armbiotechnology // <https://www.sci.am/orgsview.php?id=14&langid=3>

3 A group of insect biological control agents, some of which are also pathogenic to humans and mammals.

At the turn of 2008-2009, the Republic of Armenia was involved in the activities of the so-called "biological threat reduction programs" via cooperation with the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)⁴. The establishment of a network of biological laboratories has been actively discussed after the epidemic of African swine fever (ASF) in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as in the view of the dramatic events on the night of March 1, 2008, which provided ever more tools of pressure on the Armenian authorities to the external players. Moving from Georgia to Armenia, the virus provoked an atypical form of the disease and later spread throughout the Caucasus region, including Russia⁵. In Armenia itself only in 2007-2008 approximately 25,000 domestic pigs were culled, resulting in a significant economic loss. Getting ahead of the story, we shall note that by 2014 swine breeding in northern Armenia decreased significantly⁶. Posing a major threat to swine breeding, ASF is capable of causing enormous economic damage to pig producing countries. In the studies published at NCBI website, it is suggested that the ASF virus is able to infect people as the causative agent of dengue fever or to affect the human immune system. In DTRA, under whose auspices the relevant research was conducted in Armenia, ASF is considered a potential biological weapon⁷. According to the recent research by the Cell Biology and Virology laboratory specialists of the Institute of Molecular Biology NAS RA, the disease is becoming more chronic⁸.

Diplomatic correspondence of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan revealed information about the negotiations regarding the text of the Biological Threat Reduction Implementation Agreement within the framework of the Cooperative Biological Engagement Program belonging to the defense with a total budget of more than 2 billion dollars. Before signing the document,

4 Defense Threat Reduction Agency // <https://www.dtra.mil/>

5 Until 2011, the plague was detected in the North Caucasus and Southern federal districts, while in 2012-2013 it expanded to the Central and North-Western Federal District. In total, more than 500 outbreaks were recorded in Russia, and economic losses according to some estimates have exceeded 30 billion rubles.

6 The epidemiological status of African swine fever in domestic swine herds in the Tavush Marz region, Republic of Armenia // https://armenia.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/208/2016/01/Presentation_AM3_rev8.pdf

7 U.S. laboratory in Armenia: how biological weapon "works" close to the Russian and Iranian borders // <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2018/09/19/laboratorii-ssha-v-armenii-kak-bioruzhie-rabotaet-u-granic-rossii-i-irana>

8 Third wave of African swine fever infection in Armenia: Virus demonstrates the reduction of pathogenicity // <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5813512/#ref2>

U.S. military has promised to the Armenian government to allocate already in 2009 up to 9 million dollars for the creation of two laboratories at the Ministry of Health and Agriculture⁹.

The Biological Threat Reduction Implementation Agreement between the USA and Armenia was signed in September 2010. According to the official version, it is aimed at strengthening cooperation between the parties in preventing the spread of technologies, pathogens, as well as the knowledge and experience that can be used to develop biological weapons¹⁰. Back in the early 2000s, the Armenian company "Lysine" accused the Americans of trying to sell to Iran bacterial strains supposedly suitable for producing biological weapons. Reportedly, since 2011 special equipment has been installed at the Armenian border in order to monitor the movement of radiation, chemical and biological materials. At the same time, the goals and objectives of the secret researches funded by the Pentagon are not regulated within the bilateral interdepartmental agreements.

In 2012, special equipment for testing anthrax was installed in local laboratories. Simultaneously the patients with the symptoms of this disease unexpectedly appeared in the Gegharkunik Province, and the positive results were confirmed by diagnosis made with the help of the above-mentioned modern equipment. Two years later, in Georgia, Turkey, the Krasnodar Region, and Noyemberyan (on the border of Armenia and Georgia) there were reported South American mosquitoes which are atypical for these latitudes and which are vectors of a number of exotic diseases. At the same time, it became known that the Lugar Center in Georgia is engaged in research of the mosquito species transmitting dengue fever and Zika virus¹¹.

In September of the same 2014 year, at the "Scientific Center for Food Safety Risks Assessment and Analysis" and "Center of Veterinary – Sanitary Food Safety and Phyto-Sanitary Services", the project for Monitoring and epidemiological status of the African swine fever epizootic in the Caucasus was implemented jointly with the USA. From the American side, the participants are the Plum Island Animal Disease Center, subordinated to the Pentagon, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, University of Connecticut, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and Threat Reduction Agency U.S. Department of Defense. The program involves monitoring of the

9 Successful Dod BTRP negotiations in Armenia // https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08YEREVAN913_a.html

10 Armenia – United States European Command // <https://www.eucom.mil/about/the-region/southwestern-asia/armenia>

11 S. Tigranyan Rumors about U.S. biological laboratories in Armenia are not exaggerated // Noah's Ark. - 2019. - № 2.

current situation of ASF (selection of blood serum, the collection of strains and ASF-carrying ticks), as well as training of Armenian specialists in western biological laboratories. Funding is provided by the Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In addition, the USA CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) since 2012 was planning to implement the DTRA project in Armenia with intention to acquire access to restricted information on medico-biological resources of this country, as well as the permit to carry out experiments with highly pathogenic strains. Even if it is a coincidence, it is a quite symbolic one: the structure of the Ministry of Health of Armenia based on which the network of biological laboratories was deployed, has the exact same name¹².

By 2018, the network of "reference laboratories" in Armenia curated by the DTRA representative Eric Larsen included 7 projects, 3 of which are located in Yerevan, in the Armenian National Center for Disease Control and Prevention of Ministry of Health of Armenia (NCDCP), in the State Food Safety Service and in Nork Infectious Diseases Hospital. Four more sites operate in Ijevan (Regional Laboratory of "National Center for Disease Control and Prevention" of Ministry of Health of Armenia), Gyumri ("Center for Disease Control and Prevention"), Martuni and Vanadzor¹³. 9.8 million dollars was allocated just to equip the NCDCP reference laboratory, another 1.7 million dollars was allocated for purchase of equipment and furniture. 2.7 million and 340 thousand dollars respectively were allocated for a site in Gyumri. Due to the additional financing in the border areas of Armavir and Syunik, it is planned to open two more sites. As a result, the American partners will be able to not only control the biological and phytosanitary situation in the region, but also to use it to set up about a dozen laboratories¹⁴ united in a vertically integrated structure.

In 2016, DTRA Director Elizabeth George said that 4.1 million dollars was invested in the creation of laboratories of the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia, and 9.8 million dollars was invested in the laboratory of the Armenian Ministry of Health¹⁵.

According to the experts, we are talking about amounts that exceed typical costs for the construction

12 E.g., see: Remarks at Opening of Ministry of Health's Tavush Regional Laboratory of the National Center of Disease Control and Prevention // <https://am.usembassy.gov/remarks-opening-tavush/>

13 U.S. laboratory in Armenia: how biological weapon "works" close to the Russian and Iranian borders? // <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2018/09/19/laboratorii-ssha-v-armenii-kak-bioruzhie-rabotaet-u-granic-rossii-irana>

14 S. Tigranyan Specif. work

15 New reference laboratories opened in Armenia's capital // <https://www.tert.am/en/news/2016/07/13/laboratoria/2078050>

of similar facilities intended for purely civil purposes¹⁶. As the experience of many countries of the former Soviet Union and the "third world" shows, the formally proclaimed "noble" goals "to counter biological threats" tend to pursue purely propaganda purposes, while in reality the distance from the study of microorganisms to creating biological warfare elements is not than long. Thought-provoking is also the nature of activity in the labs which NCDPC director Artavazd Vanyan considers "quite normal", because

"... we are dealing with pathogens in the restricted access facility. However, there are no concerns about leaks of strains or highly dangerous viruses. Even in the case of a strong earthquake the risk of losing control over our existing biomaterials is practically zero, because the building is designed for magnitude 11 earthquake. In general, we work quite openly, transparently, as far as the specifics allows"¹⁷.

However, hope for a lucky break would be at least naive, because the "transparency" of the term "transparency" sometimes cleverly disguises the themed experiments of dual purpose. DTRA Projects in the "third world" countries presuppose at least the possibility of a deliberate controlled release of pathogens into the environment for the analysis of their distribution in vivo. In the context of Armenian membership in the Eurasian economic union, this creates prerequisites for cross spread of pathogens of dangerous diseases such as anthrax, brucellosis, plague, ASF, tularemia and others.

At the end of October 2017, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov pointed to the artificial nature of some outbreaks of epidemics, indicating their possible connection with the activities of foreign laboratories in some former Soviet republics¹⁸. Additional evidence on this subject was presented by the former Minister of State Security of Georgia Igor Giorgadze at the press conference in December 2018¹⁹. Can not but cause concern the constant contacts of the laboratory employees: American citizens and employees of the Ukrainian Embassy in Yerevan.

The fact that a number of facilities in Armenia and Georgia are high secret sites apparently is not an obstacle for the diplomats from the country in

¹⁶ U.S. spending on biological laboratory in Armenia talks about their dual-use // <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2274527.html>

¹⁷ S. Tigranyan. Spec. work

¹⁸ Ryabkov reminded about the biological weapon disguised as disease // <https://ria.ru/20171101/1507977931.html>

¹⁹ Press conference of Igor Giorgadze. 19.12.2018 // <https://samartali.net/2018/12/20/пресс-конференция-игоря-гиоргадзе-19-12-2018/>

which territory from 2014 to 2017 there were built 15 working biological laboratories under the auspices of the Pentagon and where widespread outbreaks of dangerous infectious diseases are regularly observed.

In September 2018, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in an interview to Kommersant said in reply to the question on Moscow's concerns about the laboratories which were funded by the USA:

"Literally 10-15 days ago on my personal behalf the Russian specialists were admitted to these laboratories.

- Were they able to go inside?

- Of course. In general, they have never had access problems (and they won't) since I became Prime Minister of Armenia. These laboratories are fully under the control of the Armenian authorities. We are ready to cooperate, and Russian experts have already been there and seen that there is nothing wrong in these laboratories. Indeed, these laboratories are of a very good quality. I think it's good that we have such high-quality laboratory. It can't possibly be used against Russia. On the contrary, we invite Russian specialists and we are ready to discuss the question of the joint use of these laboratories. They have already been there, and when they would like to do it again, there will be no restrictions"²⁰.

As stated by the (then) Chief Advisor to the Prime Minister of Armenia Arsen Gasparyan, "Russian experts visited the labs in 2017. In August of this year [2018] the full access visit of the representatives of the Russian Defense Ministry to Yerevan and Gyumri lab was organized again". According to him, the researches in biological laboratories are carried out in the field of health and agriculture, there are no problems associated with them. Moreover, there is a full understanding about this question between Moscow and Yerevan with no Washington's concerns in this regard²¹.

"Issues of biosafety, including the management of risks associated with infectious diseases of natural or intentional origin, have a special place in Russian-Armenian dialogue. Last year in Yerevan bilateral consultations devoted to this topic were held, within which a visit to the biological laboratory set

²⁰ "Vladimir Vladimirovich is such a person who highly values human relations". Nikol Pashinyan spoke to "Kommersant" about the outcome of negotiations in the Kremlin // Kommersant. - 2018 - 10 September.

²¹ Russian military officials have already visited the laboratory in Armenia – Pashinyan's Advisor // <https://ru.armeniasputnik.am/politics/20180925/14678598/predstaviteli-minoborony-rossii-uzhe-posetili-amerikanskie-laboratorii.html>

up with U.S. assistance was organized for Russian experts. We are grateful to the Armenian side for this step. During the consultations, there was a useful exchange of views on the situation in the field of biosafety and the possible directions of bilateral cooperation in this sphere. We were assured that the activities undertaken at the laboratories constructed with the Pentagon involvement will be exclusively peaceful in nature and conform to the standards of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons. Given the allied relations between Armenia and Russia, we are attuned to further development of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in the sphere of biosafety",

as noted in the comments by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation²². It is known that at the present time, Moscow and Yerevan are negotiating an agreement involving a ban on the use of these facilities by third countries. We would like to believe that the signing of such a document will cross the T's and dot the I's taking off the veil of secrecy of their work and dispelling existing concerns about their possible "double" (civilian and military) functionality.

In August 2019 several residents from the Geghovit community of Gegharkunik Region were diagnosed with anthrax transmitted by butchering a cow²³. And it not the only case of its kind in recent years which indicates that the issue of Armenian biosafety amid growing geopolitical risks will remain relevant in the long term.

22 Moscow is grateful to Yerevan for the access to the U.S. biological laboratories // <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2516648.html>

23 Anthrax infection detected in Gegharkunik // <https://newsarmenia.am/news/armenia/v-gegarkunike-vyyavlen-sluchay-zarazheniya-sibirskoy-yazvoy-/>; Source of anthrax infection in Gegharkunik found out // <https://newsarmenia.am/news/armenia/obnaruzhen-istochnik-zarazheniya-sibirskoy-yazvoy-v-gegarkunike-foto/>

KAZAKHSTAN: IS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL?

On July 11, 2018 during the meeting of the foreign ministers of the CSTO member states Sergey Lavrov expressed concern regarding a possible dual purpose of the reference laboratory network built in the CIS countries with the financial support from the U.S. He also declared the Russian Federation's striving to access them.

One of the versions of the true function of the reference laboratories situated thousands of kilometers away from the U.S. in several former Soviet republics consists in the need for safe work with viruses, not excluding the development of the elements of biological weapons circumventing the "related" Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BTWC) signed in 1972. Other hypotheses are even more alerting, to put it mildly: according to them, the "microbiologists in plain clothes" presumably test the results of their work on local residents. Nevertheless, according to the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan¹, one of the basic prerequisites for a war threat consists in the increase of the volumes of weapons of mass destruction in the world, as well as in the creation of weapons of mass effect based on new physical principles (psychotropic, electromagnetic, acoustic and others). Some researchers believe that the lack of explicit mention of biolaboratories in the list of potential threat sources is a direct reflection of the state policy.

The American-Kazakh cooperation in the field of biobacteriology dates from the conclusion of appropriate agreements in December 1993². As is well known, a sizable portion of the territory of the Kazakh SSR consisted of natural foci of plague, and also partly of hemorrhagic fevers, tularemia, tick-borne encephalitis and other fatal infections³, which led to the establishment of the network of antiplague stations and the microbiological research development. As early as 1948, the Central Asian Anti-Plague Scientific Research Institute (the Kazakh Anti-Plague Research Institute in 1992-2002) was established in the outskirts of Almaty. On its basis the M. Aikimbayev's Kazakh Scientific

Center for Quarantine and Zoonotic Diseases (KSCQZD) operates. It's the only live plague vaccine manufacturer in Kazakhstan, as well as a repository of the microbial strain collection on the basis of which widespread pathogen vaccines and about 40 items of immunobiological preparations, diagnostic reagents etc. are being produced. The authorities of Kazakhstan handed these items over to the overseas microbiologists⁴. In the territory of the KSCQZD, just not far from the old buildings, the Central Reference Laboratory (CRL)⁵ has been built with funding provided by the American associates (the cost of the center construction is \$108 million; a general contractor is AECOM, an American engineering firm⁶). Officially managed by the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan⁷, the facility has been functional since September 2016⁸ with the financial support of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the United States Department of Defense (DoD).

It is claimed that the CRL specialists can't develop biological weapons and viruses due to technical limitations. According to the international classification, the officially declared biosafety level of the unit is BSL-3, while military purposes allegedly require different kind of equipment and infrastructure, as well as a room of the highest biosafety level (BSL-4)⁹.

However, the fact that this very organization was suspected of the virus leakage during the meningitis outbreak in May 2018 (the Minister of Health Yelzhan Birtanov denied this information) is hard to consider a coincidence¹⁰. The spread of an epizootic of cattle nodular dermatitis in Kazakhstan is also being associated with the work of the CRL. In August 2019, 4 residents of the Olginka village of Akmola region in the north of the country had their anthrax diagnosis

4 See, e.g.: Kurmanov A. The Measles Outbreak in Kazakhstan is a Result of the U.S. Military Biolaboratory Activity // <https://news-front.info/2019/01/31/ajnur-kurmanov-epidemiya-kori-v-kazahstane-rezultat-deyatelnosti-voenno-biologicheskoy-laboratorii-ssha/>

5 The M. Aikimbayev's Kazakh Scientific Center for Quarantine and Zoonotic Diseases. The Central Reference Laboratory // <http://crl.org.kz>

6 Central Reference Laboratory // <https://www.aecom.com/kz/projects/central-reference-laboratory/>

7 Decision of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 24 of January 22, 2018 "About Some Questions of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan" // https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=32029611#pos=4;-36

8 The Grand Finale of Construction of the CRL // <http://crl.org.kz/eng/index.php/training/news/254-the-grand-finale-of-construction-of-the-crl>

9 Shamsutdinov E. The work noted above.

10 Is the Meningitis Outbreak the Almaty Laboratory's Fault? // <https://ru.sputniknews.kz/society/20180604/5882343/almaty-meningit-laboratoriya-svyaz-minzdrav.html>

1 The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Astana, 2017. // https://mod.gov.kz/rus/dokumenty/voennaya_doktrina

2 Shamsutdinov E. <https://informburo.kz/stati/kak-rabotaet-almatinskaya-laboratoriya-profinansirovannaya-ssha-kotoruyu-obvinyali-v-rasprostraneni-meningita.html> // <https://informburo.kz/stati/kak-rabotaet-almatinskaya-laboratoriya-profinansirovannaya-ssha-kotoruyu-obvinyali-v-rasprostraneni-meningita.html>

3 Some of these infections transcend borders and spread to Russian regions, particularly to Astrakhan Region.

confirmed¹¹.

In 2016 Amirbek Togusov, the ex-Deputy Minister of Defense of Kazakhstan, connected the use of the term "the enhanced protection" with the laboratory handling of "extremely dangerous pathogens which serve as basic ingredients of biological weapons" in his interview with *ZonaKZ*. In its time, the Pentagon conducted biological trials on military and civil volunteers from Chicago and several other American cities¹². In this regard, the construction of the laboratory in Almaty, a city with over a million dwellers located in an area of high seismic risk (at the end of the 1940s its location¹³ was situated outside the then capital of the Kazakh SSR) is particularly alarming. Akhmetzhan Yessimov, the former akim of Almaty, reported that the decision to build the CRL on the premises of the KSCQZD was made as far back as 2004 under an agreement between the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Construction began in March 2010¹⁴, whereby Mr. Yessimov did not approve of this idea:

"To be honest, I do not like this project, if I say it openly. It is being built on the territory of the Center of Zoonotic Diseases of the Ministry of Health, and it is supervised by the Ministry of Health. Built on its territory. The building permit was issued by the Agency for Construction, that is, the city had nothing to do with that.... When the Agreement is with such party as America, it is difficult to have it revised. I do not understand why Almaty. When it could be built, for example, in Otar, where there is about the same facility, where pathogenic materials are stored. It belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture. By the way, the Ministry of Agriculture spoke out in favor of this object to be there. I do not like the fact that it is located in the city, I do not like it as akim, as a person and as an Almaty citizen".

"Today, we are working closely with Kazakhstan on the construction of a world-class facility in Almaty for the storage of dangerous biological pathogens",

– said former U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan Richard Hoagland in his resignation speech.

¹¹ Four Village Residents Contract Anthrax in Kazakhstan // <https://ria.ru/20190819/1557630089.html>

¹² Nonclassified Pentagon Laboratory is Inaugurated in Almaty // https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=41&v=graiRo_Ow_4

¹³ Now "in the lower part of Almaty city, on the road to the airport, in a very unremarkable place in the suburbs" – Burdin V. There will be no plague! // <https://time.kz/articles/territory/2014/01/18/chuma-ne-budet>

¹⁴ Kazakhstan Breaks Ground on Biothreat Laboratory // <https://www.nti.org/gsn/article/kazakhstan-breaks-ground-on-biothreat-laboratory/>

Despite this, some now former officials, such as the Head of the Health Department of Almaty Mr. Erkin Durumbetov tried to refute the information about the construction of a repository of dangerous biological pathogens in the city, arguing that it is a reference laboratory "to determine the bacteriology of various especially dangerous infectious diseases such as plague, cholera, anthrax and aftosa"¹⁵. Referring to the world practice and, in particular, the American practice, the leaders of the M. Aikimbayev's KSCQZD do not deny that the institution stores especially dangerous pathogens, i.e. pathogens of plague, tularemia, brucellosis, anthrax, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever and hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome. According to available data, the CRL is fitted with equipment that allows to identify and study strains of especially dangerous pathogenic bacteria (plague, cholera, brucellosis, anthrax, hemorrhagic fever, etc.).

Currently, the joint work with The International Science and Technology Center¹⁶ funded by the United States and Canada, is being carried out to study the plague and isolate especially dangerous strains of pathogens. As part of the ongoing American program "Joint threat reduction" it is planned to use CRL in 2019-2021 for the study of especially dangerous anthrax viruses.

The following foreign structures are currently conducting research on the basis of the Kazakhstan CRL:

- the Representative office of the German Society for International Cooperation is implementing a project to study field rodents as carriers and spreaders of highly pathogenic infections such as "Hantavirus"¹⁷;
- DTRA is implementing the project

¹⁵ Yessimov does not approve for the "secret Pentagon laboratory" to appear in Almaty // https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/esimov-odobryaet-poyavlenie-sekretnoy-laboratorii-pentagona-250007/

¹⁶ According to official data, The International Science and Technology Center (ISTC) was founded in 1992, it is an intergovernmental organization connecting scientists from Kazakhstan, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia with their peers and research organizations in the EU, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway and the United States. ISTC facilitates international science projects and assists the global scientific and business community to source and engage with CIS and Georgian institutes that develop or possess an excellence of scientific know-how. – ref.: <http://www.istc.int/ru/>. ISTC cooperates with Central Asia and Caucasus Biosafety Association, founded by KSCQZD. Certain authors consider ISTC to be "an obvious tool of American political influence in the region, it has found itself nowhere else but Kazakhstan" – ref. O. Vladykin. Kazakhstan is turned into outpost of biological aggression // Independent Military Review. 2017, May 12.

¹⁷ The virus from "Hantaviridae" monotype family is a distant relative of the "Ebola" virus and is dangerous for humans. Carriers are field rodents. These infections cause people to have feverish diseases with bleeding and kidney symptoms, as well as respiratory failure.

"The Influence of *Rickettsia* spp.¹⁸ on the adaptability and development of *Yersinia* among fleas - carriers of plague in the Republic of Kazakhstan";

- Ohio College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Astana received a grant from the American councils for international education to establish partnerships with the Kazakh National Agrarian University. As a result of the interaction, the Americans expect to implement a program to organize research on priority topics of infectious diseases of animals and agricultural production systems. This activity is carried out within the framework of the U.S.-promoted program "One Health", which includes the study of the interactions of animal health, human health and the environment;

- The Regional Center for Biosafety is established together with the relevant structures of certain Western countries. This Centre holds seminars on biosafety and transportation of pathogens.

In total, the KSCQZD participates in 38 international projects, which include trainings to reduce biological risks in Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries; biosafety and biosecurity training; biological weapons nonproliferation program; analysis of outbreaks and strains of plague in Kazakhstan and the United States¹⁹. The other nine biobacteriological objects are formed on the basis of the remaining elements of the Soviet system of anti-plague stations in the cities of Nur-Sultan, Otar and Oral. They were reconstructed and equipped under "Joint Threat Reduction" U.S. program. In August 2014 Director of DTRA K. Myers was present in the village of Otar in the southern Zhambyl region at the opening of the early warning station on disease outbreaks in Central Asia (the cost of the facility is more than \$ 5 million)²⁰.

The supervisor of the program was the now-dead Senator Richard Lugar, closely associated with the American military establishment and engaged in the dismantling of Soviet nuclear facilities in Kazakhstan and other CIS republics, and subsequently focusing on biological weapons, more specifically in Ukraine and Georgia²¹.

The existing biological threats to the former Soviet

18 Ref.: Turebekov N. et al. Prevalence of *Rickettsia* species in ticks including identification of unknown species in two regions in Kazakhstan // *Parasit Vectors*. 2019 May 3;12(1):197.

19 V. Malchikova. The issues of biological security of the CSTO countries (II) // <http://vpoanalytics.com/2019/08/18/k-voprosu-o-biologicheskoy-bezopasnosti-stran-odkb-ii/>

20 R. Milov. U.S. military and biological activity on the territory of the former Soviet countries // http://pentagonus.ru/publ/voenno-biologicheskaja-dejatelnost_ssha_na_postsovetkom_prostranstve_2015/6-1-0-2622

21 Popov D. Why does the Pentagon need a biological laboratory in Kazakhstan? // <http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2013/12/25/zachem-pentagonu-biologicheskaja-laboratoria-v-kazahstane-24822.html/>

republics are of particular importance in the context of the cross-border movement of goods and cargos within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union, labor migration flows, routes of animals and birds, movement of atmospheric masses. It should be noted that the Kazakhstan side is trying as much as possible to ensure the maximum transparency of the activities of this reference laboratory, as evidenced by the results of bilateral interagency consultations on biosafety issues held in May 2017. Yerbolat Sembaev, Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted the inseparable nature of biosafety of Kazakhstan, Russia and other countries of the region. Kazakhstan advocates multilateral cooperation in nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation²². A year later, an open day was organized for representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Kazakhstan in May 2018²³.

However, despite the reassuring statements of the authorities, questions remain about the true causes of a number of recent outbreaks of infectious diseases (measles in particular). Other official explanations most often do not look convincing, giving rise to suspicions of the desire to "hush up" an uncomfortable issue. For example, back in 2017, after the Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu spoke at the Federation Council, the Pentagon's funding of bio-laboratories in the post-Soviet countries was discussed in the Kazakhstan military department, they said that "there were no military facilities created under the U.S. support". And according to the director of the KSCQZD Bakhyt Atshabar, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the construction of the facility was funded by the Pentagon, because "the scope of the reduction of weapons of mass destruction is under his jurisdiction." At the same time, there is not any guarantee that the "research base" of the center in Almaty and the regions of the republic will not work to the detriment of Russia and other CIS countries²⁴.

Such ambiguity cannot but raise certain questions. The disinterested nature of the activities of American partners in a country with long borders with Russia and China is not particularly believed. It is quite possible that other specific issues are being addressed under the guise of officially declared "civilian tasks", namely:

22 Kazakhstan and Russia discuss biosafety issues // <http://www.mfa.kz/ru/content-view/kazakhstan-i-rossia-obsudili-problemy-biobezopasnosti/>

23 Foreign diplomats visited the Central Reference Laboratory in Almaty // <http://www.mfa.kz/ru/content-view/inostrannye-diplomaty-ministerstva-inostrannyh-del-respubliki-kazakhstan-posetili-centralnuu-referentnuu-laboratoriu-v-almaty/>

24 See.: Mukhin V. Pentagon forms anti-Russian border in Kazakhstan // *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 2017. Aug 09.

- collection of information on the geographical spread of microorganisms with an eye to creating a new generation of highly effective types of offensive biological weapons;

- carrying out sabotage operations aimed at causing economic damage, decrease in immunity and the ability to reproduce the population, which has already been widely practiced previously, for example, towards Cuba;

- field testing of biological agents, with the aim of enhancing their virulence in particular, adjusting properties, tracking distribution paths, etc.;

- increased dependence of geopolitical target countries on the products of the western pharmaceutical industry;

- overcoming (however, already vague enough) the restrictions imposed by the BTWC by denying inspectors access to facilities outside the national territory, without fear of protests within the country and violations of their own laws in this area sensitive to public opinion;

- gaining access to the results of the Soviet military-biological program, which is, admittedly, largely implemented.

In 2010, the then American leader Barack Obama apologized for the medical experiments on residents of the Latin American state of Guatemala conducted by American doctors in 1946-1948²⁵. Hundreds of Guatemalans were intentionally infected with gonorrhea and syphilis, in no way, of course, giving their consent to the inhuman experiments. For all the conventions of analogies, time corrections, technology and "soft power", it is unlikely that the approaches fundamentally change within the colonial model of behavior, and experiments with "war viruses", perhaps not advertised, can affect both current "agenda" of Russian-Kazakh relations and "Eurasian" integration associations (EAEU, SCO).

Sharply increased possibility of biological terrorism dictates the need to improve the system of biological safety of states. The SCO Secretary General Vladimir Norov noted in an address to the participants of the conference "Global threats to biological safety" held in June 2019, that:

"The globalization of world political, economic, industrial and migration epidemic processes, the development of biotechnologies and sharply increased possibility of biological terrorism strongly dictate the need to improve the system of biological safety of states."

25 US apologizes for infecting Guatemalans with STDs in the 1940s // <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/10/01/us.guatemala.apology/index.html>

It is necessary to understand that, in view of the current challenges and threats, cohesion and interaction of states are the most important factors of stability in the region²⁶. At the meeting of ministers of defense of the SCO member-states that took place two months earlier in Bishkek, Sergei Shoigu called for consultations in connection with the U.S. actions to bypass the BTWC, who, under the humanitarian veil, solve the issues in creating biological damage means²⁷. And at about the same time, State Duma deputy, former Chief State Sanitary Doctor of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Medicine Gennady Onishchenko announced the necessity to resolve the issue of functioning of bio-bacteriological laboratories at the political level with the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan²⁸.

26 "It is necessary to improve biosafety systems", - the SCO Secretary General said // <https://ria.ru/20190620/1555725793.html> / 27 Gavrillov Yu. Against terror. US conduct biological programs at SCO borders // Rossiyskaya Gazeta. 2019. Apr 29.

28 Onishchenko: There are U.S. secret biological laboratories in Almaty and Otar // <https://ru.sputnik.kg/Radio/20190417/1043993942/zakrytie-biologicheskie-laboratorii-ssha-v-kazahstane.html> /

UZBEKISTAN: EPIDEMIC RISKS INCREASE

In recent years, the U.S. strengthens its work on the issue of enhanced cooperation with the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of biosecurity. It should be considered in the context of their general strategy of the long-term consolidation in former Soviet Central Asia (the region neighboring with the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran).

According to The New York Times, Washington, D.C. and Tashkent signed an agreement to provide the elimination of the threat of chemical and biological weapons at the end of 1990s. Consequently, American experts managed to get into formerly restricted chemical facilities in Uzbekistan. The facilities of this type located in the territory of the Russian Federation are still inaccessible for them¹. In May 2002, an operation to eliminate the anthrax spores remaining since Soviet times was conducted with the participation of American experts within the framework of the U.S. Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program on Vozrozhdeniya Island in the Aral Sea. It was the first time the U.S. government had carried out this kind of operation abroad². Later a team of experts from various departments was sent there from Tashkent with the purpose of epizootiological and epidemiological analysis.

Since 2004, Washington participates in Tashkent's establishing of an effective system of the infectious diseases spreading control within the framework of the Cooperative Biological Engagement Program (CBEP). The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the United States Department of Defense (DoD) is responsible for the execution of this process.

The Republic Center for Prevention and Quarantine of Plague and the Most Hazardous Infections under the Ministry of Health is the institution partaking in the American program in Uzbekistan.

The CBEP includes an implementation of a number of steps aimed at promotion of the republic's capability to detect, diagnose, analyze and keep the stains of the special danger diseases (plague, anthrax, tularemia and brucellosis) safely. One of the program's objectives consists in eliminating the equipment and the infrastructure that was used in the production of biological weapons and remains intact since Soviet times.

The first Uzbek national reference laboratory was inaugurated in Tashkent in 2007 with the support

of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the participation of the then American ambassador, Jon Purnell. In 2011, two more Class II laboratories were launched in Andijan and Fergana. They were furnished with new diagnostic equipment capable of detecting extremely dangerous pathogenic germs and preventing epidemics. In 2016, the Khorezm Regional Diagnostic Laboratory was inaugurated in Urgench.

"The completion of this regional diagnostic laboratory construction... is the evidence of the beginning of a new phase of the profound partnership between the DTRA and the Uzbekistan Government",

Pamela L. Spratlen, the U.S. ambassador to Uzbekistan, announced at the unit opening ceremony on October 17, 2016. She added,

"Experience shows that the collaboration and the sharing of resources and acquires guarantees the greatest success in countering the threat of infectious diseases. We should all endeavor to prevent or reduce the spreading of infectious diseases by means of strengthening of our national capacity and contributing our experience and resources to the efforts of the regional and international communities"³.

Recently, the partners initiated cooperative research programs as well as training programs on biological risk control and disease inspection. In August 2015, the DTRA and the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) held a seminar in Tashkent for 27 doctors, epidemiologists and laboratory specialists of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan to exchange the experience in deciphering the results of especially dangerous pathogen analysis⁴.

Just as in other former Soviet republics, the construction of the said units in Uzbekistan was funded by the DTRA, the subdivision of the Pentagon. The U.S. also financed the upgrade of the laboratories deployed in the Institute of Microbiology, the Central Military Medical Hospital under the Ministry of Defense, the Research Institute of Virology and The Center for Prevention and Quarantine of the Most Hazardous Infections under the Ministry of Health.

3 The U.S. Built a Diagnostic Biolaboratory in Uzbekistan // <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28061474.html>

4 Americans Built a Diagnostic Biolaboratory in Uzbekistan // <https://ru.sputnik.kg/asia/20161018/1029798516/amerikancy-v-uzbekistane-postroili-biolaboratoriyu.html>

1 See: Uzbek Scientist Confirms the Americans' Exploration of Soviet Chemical Facilities // <https://www.interfax.ru/world/603879>

2 Anthrax Being Buried in Uzbekistan // <https://www.fergananews.com/articles/283>

According to open source data, the network of laboratories covers Bukhara, Surkhandarya and Karakalpakstan, as well as Samarkand and Tashkent Regions. Currently, the network includes 10 units: besides Tashkent, the epidemiological stations are situated in Andijan, Bukhara, Denov, Qarshi, Nukus (Karakalpakstan), Urgench, Samarkand and Fergana, the veterinary center of Uzbekistan⁵.

The deployment of this biobacteriological network in the most populous Central Asian country is accompanied by periodic epidemic outbursts, including the ones of the diseases of unknown aetiology, with an extremely limited amount of information on them. For instance, in August 2011 70 diseased citizens came in to the hospital of the city of Yangiyul, not far from Tashkent, in 24 hours alone.

"Some patients were in so serious condition that they were stopping breathing because of the sudden drops in blood pressure. They were lying on the stairs, in the corridors and near the ambulance cars. The doctors were running towards them and applying immediate artificial respiration on them. They were covering the patients' mouths with smocks and breathing life back into them", the doctors told on the condition of anonymity⁶.

In 2012, an outbreak of an unknown disease took the lives of a dozen people in the republic. In spring 2017, an epidemic of varicella, a dangerous virus disease, broke out in Tashkent. Compared with the previous period, the number of adults who got this "childhood disease" increased tangibly⁷. In the absence of real infectious disease statistics in Uzbekistan, the outbreaks of dangerous diseases of unknown aetiology turn into "isolated incidents".

By a strange concurrence of circumstances, the growth of the incidence rate in the republic coincides with the launch of the American units aimed at the "biological threat reduction". In this connection, the opaque functioning of the laboratories and their workers' accountability to the U.S. officials raise public concerns.

By now Washington has committed significant financial resources to the realization of the "biobacteriological" programs in Uzbekistan. These funds were channeled into the setting up of the regional diagnostic laboratories, the sanitary-epidemiological stations and the centers for cooperative research and laboratory specialist training. At that, the country's authorities avoid giving comments on the reconstruction of the

biolaboratories in the territory of several former Soviet republics. Igor Kirillov, the Chief of the Russian Armed Forces' Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defense (RChBD) Troops, brought this issue to the attention in October 2018. "Frankly, we've never heard of anything like that", the representatives of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Uzbekistan announced back then⁸.

In 2018, Washington embarked on a new phase in their implementation of the CBEP in the republic. This phase stipulates the initiation of joint scientific activities. The American side is working on promoting interstate cooperation in skill-sharing among research workers of the profile centers, cooperative researching with the use of advanced laboratory equipment, organizing professional tests, and elaboration of standardized manuals for Central Asian microbiologists. According to official information, the collaborative programs involving the USAID are aimed at combating tuberculosis and other dangerous diseases⁹. Under an agreement with the European Union, the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Center of Excellence was inaugurated in Tashkent in 2015. Its main responsibility is to coordinate knowledge and experience sharing among the countries of the region in order to prevent the spread of dangerous materials in Central Asia¹⁰.

At the same time, the government of Uzbekistan enhances cooperation with other countries as well. These actions stem from the necessity to modernize the national health care system which faces up a lot of challenges of both objective and subjective nature, such as a sharp increase in population, a deepening water crisis, problems of interaction with the neighboring states etc. Thus, in December 2018 the Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (Rospotrebnadzor) with the support from the Government of Russia donated (for the second time) a motor car microbiological laboratory for express diagnostics to the Republic Center for Prevention and Quarantine of Plague and the Most Hazardous Infections of Uzbekistan within the framework of the Program of Assistance to the Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia with the Rapid Response to Infectious Diseases. According to the federal service,

5 Bioterrorism in Action // <https://polit-asia.kz/bioterrorizm-v-dejstvii/>

6 Uzbekistan: An Outbreak of Unknown Disease with Symptoms of Cholera in Tashkent Region // <https://www.fergananews.com/articles/7085>

7 Uzbekistan: Ministry of Health Holds Back the Chickenpox Epidemic? // <https://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=26132>

8 The Ministry of Defense of Uzbekistan "Has Never Heard" of the U.S. Lab Reconstruction in the Republic // <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/asia/20181004/1027005828/uzbekistan-rekonstrukcii-laboratoriy-usa.html>

9 United States and Uzbekistan Establish Center for Innovative Distance Training and Monitoring (photos) // <https://kun.uz/ru/23569637>

10 Uzbek Scientist Confirms the Americans' Exploration of Soviet Chemical Facilities // <https://www.interfax.ru/world/603879>

"The modern equipped laboratory is designed for independent laboratory research when working in nidi of infectious diseases located in remote and hard-to-reach regions of Uzbekistan, as well as in disaster areas"¹¹.

The enhancing of cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation (including the strengthening of the legal framework) will bring to a greater predictability of the epidemiological situation in the country and to the increase of efficiency of the country's own capacity to prevent and react to dangerous diseases.

11 On the Transfer of the Mobile Laboratory to Uzbekistan // https://rospotrebnadzor.ru/about/info/news/news_details.php?ELEMENT_ID=11034

"GREATER EURASIA": TOWARDS CREATION OF UNIFIED SYSTEM FOR BIOLOGICAL THREATS

Back in 2006, in an informal report presented at the Sixth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, Russia expressed its concerns about some scientific works carried out in the United States that could lead to the creation of "ethnic weapons". And although these, now scientific and applied works, have not yet led to sad consequences, it is already now necessary to think about joint projects on measures to prevent biomedical threats within the framework of the CSTO, SCO and other Eurasian integration structures¹.

It is therefore no accident that, despite systematic attempts to belittle or dilute the biosafety issues discussed in this report (including attempts to present them as the product of politically biased propaganda), they are regularly discussed at various representative international events. In particular, during the Fifth Eastern Economic Forum (EEF-2019) in Vladivostok, it took an "honorable" (let's not be afraid of this word) place in a number of other acute issues, such as situation on the Korean Peninsula or the Kashmir crisis.

"The situation with foreign laboratories near the borders of Russia is certainly tense. So far, nothing has changed in a positive way. We are preparing a level of readiness that will allow us to neutralize the risks, if suddenly such appear. We would not like this to happen, so today we are trying to conduct active negotiation processes, and the Foreign Ministry is doing a great job in this regard",

– said Mrs. Anna Y. Popova, Head of the Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (Rospotrebnadzor), adding that the creation of biological laboratories working with pathogens on the territory of a some former Soviet republics at the expense of the U.S. budget, poses a threat not only to the residents of these countries, but also for their sovereignty². Accordingly, Russia has to think through and deploy a system of protection measures because of Pentagon-funded facilities operating in close proximity to the Russian borders.

It seems that it was no coincidence that this

¹ The "Lugar Bio Laboratory" in Georgia as a plan of «biological war» against Russia and Eurasia // <http://vpoanalytics.com/2018/09/13/biolaboratoriya-lugara-v-gruzii-v-planah-biologicheskoy-vojnny-protiv-rossii-i-evrazii/>

² The Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (Rospotrebnadzor) is concerned about activities carried out by the foreign laboratories close to the Russian borders // <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/6840481>

issue was raised at the EEF 2019. Bypassing existing international norms, the development of warfare microbes and viruses, their carriers and means of delivery, poses a danger to all mankind, but first for most – for the countries considered by the Americans to be their geopolitical opponents or economic competitors. And if the threat is common – then it is more useful and promising to work together on ways to overcome it.

In August 2019, the Committee of General Staff Chiefs of the Armed Forces of the CIS Member States agreed on the main directions of development of the joint system of radiological, chemical and biological protection (RCBP) until 2025, taking into account its intended purpose. As explained by the Head of the RCBP troops of the Russian Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, the joint system involves not only the exchange of experience and joint training, but also the development of a common methodology and criteria for assessing and monitoring the situation in the territory of the Commonwealth, the provision of data and the development of the legal framework.

"The urgency for further development of the system is dictated by modern challenges and security threats associated, inter alia, with the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty, as well as with the involvement of the former Soviet republics in biological programs for dual-use research, bypassing the Biological Weapons Convention",

– underlined I. Kirillov.

It is known that in the areas of deployment of biological bacteriological objects on the territory of a number of former Soviet republics there were repeatedly recorded cases of the spread of infectious diseases. Active work on monitoring, evaluation and exchange of data on the RCB is currently being conducted by the Russian side with Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which has signed relative agreement³.

Expanding cooperation with the former Soviet republics in the field of joint response to epidemiological threats, Russia sends to their disposal mobile laboratories that have successfully proven themselves when working in epidemic centers, as well as during large-scale events; such steps contribute to strengthening of the joint capacity to respond to threats of sanitary and epidemiological

³ A. Aleksandrov. New Concept of the Military Commonwealth, Red Star. 2019, August 26.

nature. All of this is more important because reports of outbreaks of infectious diseases, including those not quite typical for the natural and climatic conditions of Russia and its neighbors, continue to arrive on an all too regular basis. Thus, in September 2019 in the Southern regions of Russia bordering with Ukraine mosquito-spread West Nile fever came again⁴. While Tbilisi Lugar Center was implementing the project of "Raising Awareness about Barcoding of Sand Flies in Georgia and Caucasus", residents of Dagestan's border regions reported the appearance of flies looking as sand flies (which can be circulators of a number of dangerous diseases). Insects settled indoors, in bathrooms, sewers and bit people while bathing, causing severe rashes. It is also possible that these sprayers were tested in Chechnya in spring 2017, when local residents reported a drone spraying white powder on the border with Georgia. The Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) has access to this area within frameworks of "Georgia Land Border Security Project" Program. The border is controlled by the American PMC Parsons Government Services International, with which DTRA has signed a contract⁵.

The authors of the article "Agricultural research, or a new bioweapon system?"⁶ published in "Science" suggest, that within frameworks of Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) and its "Insect Allies" Project, those can be used to spread genetically modified viruses. "Insect Allies" Pentagon Project Manager Blake Bechstein in his interview to "Washington Post" rejects suspicions of the European scientists, at the same time recognizing, that a series of developed technologies can have "dual focus"⁷. Earlier, Mr. I. Kirillov presented documents proving Tbilisi Lugar Center to develop technologies for the warfare use of infected insects, in particular with the help of drones. Thus, in the description of the patent No. 8967029 issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Agency, it is stated that with the help of this UAV the enemy can be destroyed or incapacitated without risk to the American soldiers. *"Other patents show different types of munitions for the delivery of chemical and biological compounds. In their description such characteristics as low unit cost of defeat and lack of need of contact with manpower*

*of the opponent are noted"*⁸.

Such examples can be continued, but we shall better stop for now. The development of biological weapons within the framework of the concept of non-contact warfare poses a real danger to the countries of "Greater Eurasia", actualizing the tasks of joint neutralization of existing threats, including not only common statements, but also real actions.

4 Western Nile Fever attacks the City of Taganrog – What shall we be aware of, and how we can recover from the dangerous disease // <http://bloknot-taganrog.ru/news/v-taganrog-prishla-likhoradka-zapadnogo-nila-chego>

5 V. Prohvatilov. Bioweapon engineers call insects for help // <https://www.ritm Eurasia.org/news--2018-10-26--razrabotchiki-biologicheskogo-oruzhija-zovut-na-pomosch-nasekomyh-39234>

6 R. Reeves, S. Voeneky, D. Caetano-Anollés, F. Beck, C. Boète. Agricultural research, or a new bioweapon system? // Science 05 Oct 2018: Vol. 362, Issue 6410, pp. 35-37

7 V. Prohvatilov. Mentioned article.

8 "Insect Allies": Do USA create biological weapons under the veil of scientific projects // <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/561425-biologicheskoe-oruzhie-ssha>