There Must Be a Response to the Risk of Biological Catastrophe Posed by US Military Laboratories

In light of the civil disturbances which have swept across Kazakhstan, the risk of a biological catastrophe is growing because of secret US military laboratories in regions of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, which are potentially susceptible to sociopolitical unrest. Aside from the fact that the US’ development of delayed-action bioweapons in Kazakhstan is an issue that has already been raised repeatedly, hardly anyone will disagree that this risk is increased in the event of more riots, either when ‘demonstrators’ force entry into such laboratories, or as a result of an outbreak of the US’ own biological catastrophe in the form of a ‘leak’ of especially dangerous biomaterials.

Incidentally, witnesses reported that during recent events in Kazakhstan, on the night from January 5 to 6, there were allegedly armed infiltrations into the Pentagon’s Central Reference Laboratory. This was at the Aikimbaev National Scientific Center for Especially Dangerous Infections in Alma-Ata. Some media outlets even disclosed, again based on eyewitness accounts, that they supposedly saw people in hazmat suits, which generated mass concern due to the possibility of lethal biomaterials escaping from the laboratory.

In this context, Kazakhstani media outlets emphasize that US military specialists have conducted active operations in the region, where serious unrest occurred from the start of the year, in at least two biological laboratories: the Central Reference Laboratory in Alma-Ata and another laboratory in Jambyl Region. It is a known fact that both...
these facilities have a high (third) level of protection and were financed by the Pentagon. One of the areas of work of these centers was the collection and exportation to the US of biomaterials from research which was conducted in the region in Soviet times, as well as the modelling of disease outbreaks.

The general budget for the Pentagon’s ‘scientific programs’ in Kazakhstan is over $400 million. A department of the DTRA, run by colonel Steven Colder, in the US Embassy in Nur-Sultan oversees its expenses. The American Central-Asian Office for the Control of Diseases (CDC) acts as a political facade in the region. It is led by Daniel Singer, who US diplomats describe as a doctor. However, he actually acts as a colonel of the US Air Force Medical Service who manages the Reference Laboratory and the Center for Especially Dangerous Infections. It is noteworthy that this center is a contractor of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), which manages operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria; this follows, in particular, from declassified documents about five of the US Department of Defense’s programs in 2017-2018.

A report published in the Frontiers of Public Health journal in 2021 confirms the link between the US and its NATO allies over military research in the Pentagon’s laboratories in Kazakhstan. It is about the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology’s (Munich) eight years of work in Kazakhstan. Military specialists from Germany worked in Kazakhstani institutes, controlled by the DTRA, studying the specifics of the spread of infections in the region. Financing was conducted through the OR12 branch of Germany’s Foreign Office, which is responsible for biological and chemical weapons. According to data on research funding, published in open sources, over eight years 28 projects have been carried out in Kazakhstan on behalf of the US army. Military personnel from the US Naval Medical Center (Maryland), employees from the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology (Munich) and soldiers from laboratories in Porton Down (Great Britain) were involved in them.

Under these circumstances, the local media reports and eyewitness accounts of the forced entry into one of these laboratories, and ‘people in hazmat suits’ during the protests on the night from January 5 to 6, take on a special significance with regard to regional safety. This was in Alma-Ata, where serious clashes occurred with armed bandits who appeared outside the building. Although nobody has officially confirmed this information, it provokes a special concern. This is especially so if one takes into account that in the background of the mass looting and the flight of security forces before the clashes began, the Prosecutor-General’s Office and the premises of the Committee of National Safety were left unguarded.

In the same context, it is worthy to note that, despite the very high risk of terrorists entering the laboratory during the attempted coup by jihadists, according to local sources Russian soldiers were told not to protect the facility and the complex of affiliated buildings. “During the violence in Alma-Ata, local media reported how unknown people opened windows and made their way to the first floor of a strategically important facility. Being referred to here is the Aikimbaev Scientific Center for Quarantine and Zoonotic Research (the US Central Reference Laboratory operates at its base)... Local residents claim that the laboratory is now almost abandoned and is in a dismal state... When agreeing on a list of strategically important buildings that were planned to be protected by CSTO CRRF peacekeepers, the laboratory in Alma-Ata was ruled out. The Russian side pressed the need to do so, but the government of Kazakhstan decided not to submit it to the protection of the CSTO.”

In these conditions, the issue of safety in a secure location, controlled by the authorities of Kazakhstan, with biologically hazardous drugs from US laboratories, becomes the most important component not just for Kazakhstan’s own security, but for that of the entire region. For, not only militants sent by the West to carry out a coup attempt in Kazakhstan, but also the US intelligence services themselves can take advantage of this state of affairs by carrying out a manufactured incident in the form of a supposedly ‘accidental leak’ of elements of biological weapons, unleashing biological catastrophe.

On January 12, the Kazakhstani platform Vision published an article on the activities of the Pentagon’s laboratories in post-Soviet countries. It was titled ‘The Dangerous Presence of the United States: Have Viruses Escaped from Secret American Laboratories in Alma-Ata?’ In particular, the platform recalls that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced in June 2021 that he was suspending military biologists from the United States from working in one of the country’s scientific laboratories. US military specialists have been studying dangerous infections there for over 10 years, including plague, anthrax, fevers and various coronaviruses. These secret US laboratories are supplied with the cutting-edge equipment, in other words, this is a very serious investment.

The first cause to suspect Americans of the ‘careless handling of dangerous infections’ came in 2007. This was when an American laboratory opened in the Institute of Virology in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), and the Pentagon allocated a military grant to the study of brucellosis in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These projects were codenamed UZ-4 and...
KZ-2, respectively. The following year, a sharp spike in brucellosis infections was noticed across the entire region, and anthrax appeared.

Research began in 2013 on Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) as part of the KZ-29 project. This took place in Kazakhstan with the participation of specialists from the US Navy and British biological weapons specialists from Porton Down. ‘Biologists’ studied the spread of the disease via ticks in the south of Kazakhstan at the ‘Center for Especially Dangerous Infections’ in Alma-Ata. A year later, a large outbreak of the exact same fever was recorded in Kazakhstan, moreover, in the south of Kazakhstan, and ticks were carriers of the disease.

In 2017, as part of the KZ-33 project, the US Department of Defense conducted research in Kazakhstan on the spread of coronavirus via bats. Then, notoriously, the coronavirus pandemic erupted in the region.

As Vision emphasizes, the results of research in 2018 by a group of Western scientists is yet another cause for concern. They published an article in Science, a respected scientific journal, where based on open sources it is proved that the US military is funding work on bioweapons in contravention of the 1972 Convention. This is implicitly confirmed by the US’ continual refusal to ratify the protocol of the Convention’s member countries on control mechanisms over biological developments.

A solution to the problem of the unlawful activity of secret laboratories in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, is unquestionably a political matter. At the same time, one mustn’t forget that in this case it is not about an illegal establishment (specifically, of a US military base in Kazakhstan), and that, with the commitments made by this country in relation to its membership of the CTSO, this is unacceptable. Therefore, an objective parliamentary investigation of the activities of US military laboratories, and the development of bioweapons there by the US and its NATO allies, should be carried out. Some assistance with this can be provided by sending a group of CSTO experts to Kazakhstan, who should study all available documents about who, when and what was done there as part of military research programs, and the personal data of the participants. Based on the results of these investigations, and after obtaining evidence of US violations of the biological weapons control regime, this issue will need to be raised for discussion at the UN, along with the official closure of all US laboratories that have been created in recent years along Russia’s borders.

Given the lively discussion of questions of mutual security measures between the United States and NATO that is currently taking place, the solution of this issue right now seems to be especially relevant.

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