

**Formal Consultative Meeting of the States Parties
to the Convention on the Prohibition of the
Development, Production and Stockpiling
of Bacteriological (Biological) and
Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction**

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Item 6 of the agenda

**Respective outstanding questions by the Russian Federation
to the United States and to Ukraine concerning the fulfilment
of their respective obligations under the Convention in the context
of the operation of biological laboratories in Ukraine**

**On the Goals and Objectives of U.S.-Ukraine
Cooperation in Ensuring Sanitary and
Epidemiological Welfare of the Population**

Submitted by the Russian Federation

1. According to the statements and comments of the American side (including within the framework of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons - BTWC, as well as the UN Security Council), cooperation of the US military department and its affiliated Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) with the Ukrainian side is of "exclusively peaceful nature", and its main goal is allegedly assistance in the establishment of the sanitary and epidemiological surveillance system in Ukraine, destroyed after the USSR collapse and protection of the Ukrainian population against epidemiological threats.
2. At the same time, these assertions are completely refuted by the facts that indicate:
 - The systematic destruction of the state sanitary and epidemiological service of Ukraine;
 - concentration of research in laboratories on Ukrainian territory only on a group of dangerous pathogens considered as a threat to biological security or as potential agents for the development of biological weapons;
 - implementation as a priority of collection of information on infectious diseases, as well as biological samples of people and their export, export of national collections containing strains of pathogenic microorganisms, including those that overcome the protective effect of vaccines and are resistant to antibiotics;
 - Unsatisfactory and significantly worse than in other post-Soviet countries in terms of infectious morbidity, the organization of monitoring of current infections, immunization of the population, and the organization of care for infectious patients.
3. Analysis of the events of recent years (including those in the post-Soviet space) shows that the United States has been cooperating according to a certain algorithm. First, the system of sanitary and epidemiological surveillance is destroyed, then control of the situation is lost and no necessary preventive measures are taken. Then the laboratory base is reconstructed (several centers are created and the remaining network is destroyed) and the flow of pathogens from both human material and environmental samples is concentrated. Specialists are retrained and as a result the system of internal interactions and all monitoring of biological



threats are restructured, and the response system falls under the control of another state. This is done literally online, using U.S.-developed software for recording infectious diseases and the results of laboratory tests of microorganisms. Such "concentration" laboratories are mostly formed on the basis of institutions that previously dealt with especially dangerous infections and were part of the structure of sanitary and epidemiological services.

4. The thesis of cooperation of the U.S. military department to ensure sanitary and epidemiological well-being is also refuted by the results of the analysis of the agreement between the parties on cooperation to prevent the spread of technology, pathogens and information that can be used to develop biological weapons as of 2005. This cooperation was aimed exclusively at studying dangerous pathogens. This is evidenced by the fact that under this agreement, the Pentagon supports the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in the field of joint biological research, determination of threats from biological agents in relation to dangerous pathogens deployed on facilities on Ukrainian territory. The agreement also prescribes storage of pathogens only in the laboratories, which are assisted by the American military department, as well as sending samples of strains collected in Ukraine and data on the spread of infectious diseases in this country to the United States. The results of work under the agreement are confidential, but Pentagon representatives can participate in all activities related to the implementation of the agreement.

5. Contrary to the sound assurances of the U.S. side, in practice the result of cooperation, supposedly aimed at ensuring the sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population, was on the contrary consistent steps to weaken the Ukrainian sanitary and epidemiological service and its laboratory base, which, with the advisory support of U.S. experts, eventually led first to the reorganization of the sanitary and epidemiological service (SES) in 2014 and subsequently to its complete liquidation in 2017. After 2014, the functions of the SES were divided between the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food and the Ministry of Health, under which a public health center was created.

6. By Decree No. 348 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated March 29, 2017, the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service was liquidated, and its functions were transferred to the State Service for Food Safety and Consumer Protection. This decision was made at a time when the Ukrainian healthcare system was actually under external control and the acting Minister of Health was U.S. citizen U.Suprun.

7. The new structures, subordinated to different ministries, could not properly coordinate their actions. Moreover, they were not given the right to conduct inspections to check the compliance with epidemiological safety requirements. The work of the new services was actually reduced to just monitoring the situation and writing reports, without any possibility to somehow prevent epidemics.

8. In addition, the system for training specialists for the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service was completely destroyed. By the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, according to Ukrainian professionals themselves, epidemiologists had not been graduating from universities of Ukraine for five years.

9. In 2020, the Kiev District Administrative Court opened proceedings to appeal the government's liquidation of the State Sanitary and Epidemiological Service. According to the plaintiff, liquidation of the competent body for sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population excluded the possibility of implementing the provisions of the law of Ukraine "On protection of population against infectious diseases", contributes to their spread and violates constitutional rights of citizens to protection of as of the highest social value.

10. However, we do not know the court's decision on this issue.

11. Another result of so called "assistance" by the U.S. in ensuring sanitary and epidemiological well-being in Ukraine was a measles epidemic, a polio outbreak, a tuberculosis emergency, and diphtheria.

12. In terms of the number of measles cases in 2018, Ukraine ranked first among all countries in the WHO European region - 35 thousand cases in 10 months of 2018 and 14 deaths.

13. The extremely low immunization coverage, especially among children, which, according to the Center for Public Health of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, did not exceed 40%, while the World Health Organization required at least 95%, led to a deplorable result. For example, an outbreak of polio occurred in Transcarpathia in 2015, with child immunization coverage of less than 14%. Cases of the disease, which had been eradicated in the WHO European Region more than 20 years ago, were recorded in Ukraine in 2021 as well.

14. Nevertheless, the prevention of these infections and expansion of immunization programs were not among U.S. priorities for cooperation. The centers and laboratories that cooperated and received funds from the Pentagon did not focus on immunization, prevention of vaccine-preventable infections, or the development of surveillance networks for measles, rubella, polio, and diphtheria, nor did they train specialists in these fields. Work was focused exclusively on dangerous infections of interest to American researchers.

15. Taken together, the analysis of the current sanitary and epidemiological situation and the contents of the 2005 agreement convincingly show that the U.S. participation in financing biological laboratories in Ukraine, joint research programs with the participation of the Pentagon were not intended to strengthen the system of epidemiological surveillance to reduce risks to public health. The scope of U.S. interests in Ukraine included only work with particularly dangerous pathogens typical of this territory and the territories bordering the Russian Federation.

16. Such work was also planned at the laboratory in Simferopol, the capital of the resort region with an annual tourist influx of about 9 million people from the entire Commonwealth of Independent States.

17. In 2014, after Crimea's reunification with Russia and during the formation of the peninsula's sanitary and epidemiological service, documents were found on the adoption of projects to construct a laboratory building on the basis of a half-destroyed anti-plague station. Samples of field material (ectoparasites, internal organs of rodents) and human sera were found collected in Crimea and prepared for shipment abroad to France to study the spread of dangerous diseases (e.g., Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever). Specialists from Crimea were trained in the U.S. to select, sort, and prepare for transport of various samples, and there were plans to install special software products developed in the U.S. to control the work of the personnel.

18. The nature of U.S.-Ukrainian cooperation in the field of infection control is clearly demonstrated by the analysis of publications by U.S. and Ukrainian researchers.

19. A review of scientific articles published in foreign scientific journals included in Web-of-Science and Scopus databases shows that Ukrainian institutions cooperating with the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense conducted joint research with American specialists on various human and animal infections (including dangerous ones), studying pathogen vectors, prevalence and genetic characteristics of microbial strains. Publications were searched using the keywords "microbiology," "virology," "infectious diseases," and "vectors."

20. As a result of the most superficial research, we have found out that only four institutions (Institute of Veterinary Medicine, Kyiv; Daniel Galitsky Research Institute of Epidemiology and Hygiene, Lviv; Institute of Experimental and Clinical Veterinary Medicine, Kharkiv; Odessa Anti-Plague Institute named after M.I. Mechnikov, Lviv). Mechnikov) published in 2019-2022 17 articles on the mentioned topics together with researchers from the USA.

21. List of publications:

22. Institute of Veterinary Medicine, Kiev:

i. enzootic Teschen's disease (article 2022 co-authored with researchers from the USA from the University of Alaska and Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus).

ii. Highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza viruses (paper 2021, co-authored with researchers from the US - University of Alaska and UK - Cambridge).

- iii. Microbiota of *Ixodes ricinus* and *Dermacentor reticulatus* ticks collected in densely populated cities (paper 2021, co-authored with researchers from the University of Texas, USA).
 - iv. Rabies in domestic carnivores and wild animals in Ukraine (article 2021 in Co-authorship with researchers from the USA from the Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Poland from Warsaw University and Switzerland - SAFOSO AG, an FAO partner organization).
 - v. Metagenomic analysis of *Ixodes ricinus* ticks from Eastern Europe (paper 2021 co-authored with researchers from the University of Texas, Texas Genomics Institute, from the University of Science and Technology, China).
23. Research Institute of Epidemiology and Hygiene. Daniel Galitsky Research Institute of Epidemiology and Hygiene, Lviv:
- i. hantaviruses of the Old World and CCHFV viruses (article 2020 co-authored with researchers from the University of Florida, University of Tennessee, USA).
24. Institute of Experimental and Clinical Veterinary Medicine, Kharkov:
- i. Genomic sequences of siciniviruses from North America (paper 2021 co-authored with researchers from the United States and Kenya).
 - ii. Whole-genome sequencing of avian coronavirus (2019 article, co-authored with researchers from the United States).
 - iii. Full genome sequence of *Brucella abortus* 68 (paper 2021, co-authored with researchers from the United States).
 - iv. Influenza A virus analysis of H1N1 and H7N9 strains (2020 article, co-authored with researchers from the United States).
 - v. Genotyping of Newcastle disease viruses of subgenotypes Vc and VIn in domestic chickens and nearly healthy wild birds (2019 article, co-authored with researchers from the United States, Mexico).
 - vi. Genotyping of a tuberculosis pathogen isolated from patients in the Kharkiv region, Ukraine, identified as the Beijing strain (article 2019, co-authored with researchers from the USA).
 - vii. Complete genome sequence of a Newcastle disease virus isolate (2019 article, co-authored with researchers from USA, Tanzania).
 - viii. Newcastle disease vaccine viruses in wild birds (2016 article, co-authored with researchers from USA, Bulgaria, Brazil).
 - ix. Complete genome sequence of the virulent African swine fever virus from domestic pigs in Ukraine (article 2019, co-authored with researchers from the USA)
25. Odesa Anti-Plague Institute named after M.V. Lomonosov. Mechnikov:
- i. Characterization of tick-borne encephalitis virus isolates from ticks in southern Ukraine (2017 article, co-authored with researchers from the United States).
 - ii. Phylogenetic analysis of tick-borne encephalitis virus strains found in a soaked tick and in a traveler returning from Russia (article 2021, jointly with researchers from the USA).
26. In conclusion, we should like to emphasize once again: the statements that the assistance and financing by the United States of America of research on biological facilities on Ukrainian territory was aimed at ensuring sanitary and epidemiological well-being are untrue. The work and research did not address the urgent issues of protecting the health of the population of Ukraine from infectious threats, but were aimed solely at the study of particularly dangerous pathogens, including those typical of this region, which includes the territory of Russia.
27. The analysis raises the following specific and substantiated questions:

- How was the U.S. assistance, as implemented, supposed to ensure the sanitary and epidemiological well-being of the population of Ukraine?
- What were the goals and objectives of such assistance, and what were its key performance indicators?
- What public health indicators have improved over the past 10-15 years due to the U.S. assistance in Ukraine?
- Has the sanitary-epidemiological situation in the country become better? Has the infectious morbidity decreased, has immunization coverage increased, has testing for infections become more accessible, are there more epidemiologists, microbiologists, sanitary doctors, have there been new developments of tests, vaccines, has the accounting of infectious morbidity improved?

28. It is obvious that during the period of cooperation and implementation of the agreement, not only has the epidemiological situation in Ukraine not improved, but, unfortunately, it has become one of the worst in the WHO European Region.

29. We would ask the Ukrainian and American sides to provide the necessary explanations.
