

Statement by Russian Permanent Representative to the UN
Vassily Nebenzia at UNSC briefing on biological laboratories in Ukraine
(March 18, 2022)

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me express our heartfelt deep condolences to the Permanent Representative of Ireland, Ambassador Byrne Nason, and the entire Mission of Ireland, on the sudden demise of Deputy Permanent Representative J. Kelly. This is a huge loss for the Mission of Ireland and all of us. Please accept our condolences.

Mr. President,

Colleagues,

As we said earlier, during the special military operation in Ukraine we discovered facts that Ukrainian authorities, supported and directly sponsored by the US Department of Defense, were implementing dangerous projects in the framework of a military biological program. This activity was carried out on the Ukrainian territory, in the middle of Eastern Europe and close to Russia's western borders, which posed a real threat to biological security of our country and the region.

A week ago upon our request UNSC held its first meeting on this issue, where we asked some questions to our Western colleagues, but did not receive any answers.

US officials claim that there are no US-controlled biolabs in Ukraine, however the Permanent Representative of the United States could not explain how these statements reconcile with the fact that there are documents proving this sort of "cooperation" between Kiev and Washington. I am referring to 2005 Agreement between the US Department of Defense and Ukrainian Health Ministry which stipulates Pentagon's support for "cooperative biological research" with regard to "dangerous pathogens located at the facilities in Ukraine".

Though the American delegation is not able or willing to answer our questions, the answers come to light as our Defense Ministry studies the materials received from personnel of Ukrainian biolabs that address US and NATO military biological programs in Ukraine.

Over the past week, we have discovered new details indicating that components of biological weapons were being developed in Ukraine.

The 2005 US-Ukraine Agreement that I mentioned and that we still expect the US representative to comment on was up and running all those years. As we

take it from the documents, American colleagues were not assisting the Ministry of Health as they claimed, but rather the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. This morning we circulated as UNSC document a set of materials, where you can find “Plan of technical assistance to certain recipients of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine”. I suggest that you should study it carefully. It confirms that Pentagon’s Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) directly funded and supervised military biological projects in Ukraine. The total funding amounted to 32 million USD, and the recipients of those funds were the following labs of the Defense Ministry of Ukraine:

- In Kiev – 10th regional sanitation and epidemiological branch of the Central Sanitation and Epidemiological Department of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

- in Odessa – 27th regional sanitation and epidemiological branch of the Central Sanitation and Epidemiological Department of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

- in Lvov – 28th regional sanitation and epidemiological branch of the Central Sanitation and Epidemiological Department of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

- in Kharkov – 108th regional sanitation and epidemiological branch of the Central Sanitation and Epidemiological Department of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

Let me flag another critical aspect. Representatives of the US Department of State still get confused when asked about it and assure that the United States allegedly takes no part in running any biolabs in Ukraine. Facts, however, speak of the opposite.

Under the technical assistance plan that I mentioned, the “donor” (US Department of Defense) set out goals, determined the scope of Ukraine-based projects, endorsed lists of equipment required, and delegated broad authorities to its affiliated contractor “Black & Veatch” in cooperation with Ukrainian state authorities. The recipient of American assistance (Defense Ministry of Ukraine) had to grant “timely access of personnel” of the Pentagon and its contractor to the labs on the territory of Ukraine “for the purpose of conducting works” as part of the projects. Apart from the Pentagon personnel, they also had to grant access to the facilities to some “foreign researchers”. The projects were not supposed to be implemented by, but rather “with participation of” Ukrainian researchers.

Simply speaking, Ukrainian authorities gave Pentagon a *carte blanche* and let them carry out dangerous biological experiments on the territory of Ukraine. Thereby, the American contractor was exempt from any taxes under Ukrainian legislation.

What did Ukrainian scientists and people of the country get in return? Free travel to international conferences “based on the tariffs for meals and lodging endorsed for official travel of US governmental officials”. A nice “compensation” for having most hazardous research conducted right on their doorstep.

This is not the “noble” assistance to Ukraine that American representatives are ranting about. This is cynical use of Ukraine’s territory and population for dangerous research that Washington does not want to have at home so that to not put its own population at risk.

We would not be surprised should similar facts come to light regarding the activity of US-sponsored labs in other parts of the globe. We call on states who provide their areas to Pentagon for such experiments to read carefully contract documents regarding their cooperation with the United States in the biological area. We fully support China’s demand to the United States to disclose information about activities of 360 US-controlled labs in the world.

Back to Ukraine. It is no coincidence that the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency chose the biolabs in Kiev, Odessa, Lvov, and Kharkov. They were the executors of the UP-8 project aimed at studying the pathogens of the Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever, leptospirosis and hantaviruses. From our point of view, the interest of US military biologists in these pathogens is related to the fact that they have natural foci both on the territory of Ukraine and in Russia, and their use can be disguised as natural outbreaks of diseases.

The Kharkov laboratory was also home to project P-781 on the study of ways of transmitting diseases to humans through bats. This work was done jointly with the infamous R. Lugar Center in Tbilisi.

In this context, we should make a special mention of the company “Black & Veatch” that the Pentagon chose as a contractor for Ukraine. This is not an ordinary business. For over 100 years, it has been working for the US armed forces, building military bases and facilities, including the labs in Los Alamos, where nuclear weapons were developed.

Research in the area of transmitting diseases to humans through bats is systematic and has been conducted in Ukrainian labs since at least 2009 under the direct supervision of specialists from the United States. During the implementation of these projects, six families of viruses (including coronaviruses) and three types of pathogenic bacteria (pathogens of plague, brucellosis and leptospirosis) were identified. Those pathogens are most favorable for the purposes of infection, as they are characterized by resistance to drugs and rapid speed of spread from animals to humans.

Within the framework of the FLU-FLYWAY project, the Kharkov Institute of Veterinary Medicine studied wild birds as vectors for the spread of avian influenza. At the same time, the conditions under which spread processes can

become unmanageable, cause economic damage and pose risks to food security were assessed. Documents were discovered that confirm the involvement of the Kharkov Institute in the collection of avian influenza virus strains with high epidemic potential and capable of overcoming the interspecific barrier.

Defense Ministry of Russia keeps receiving more documents that prove the fact of transfer of blood serum samples of Ukrainian citizens to third countries, including Great Britain, Georgia, Germany. Having analyzed that data, we can say that Ukrainian experts were not aware of potential risks of transferring biological samples. They had to act blindly and did not realize the real goals of research conducted. This does not seem surprising if we recall that under the contract documents that I mentioned, they had a secondary role to play.

Information continues to be received about attempts to destroy biomaterials and documentation in laboratories in Ukraine in order to “cover up the tracks” of a military biological program.

We know that during the liquidation measures in the laboratory of veterinary medicine in Khlebodarskoye, the employees (citizens of Ukraine) were not even allowed into the building. This laboratory cooperates with Anti-Plague Research Institute named after Mechnikov in Odessa, which conducts research with pathogens of plague, anthrax, cholera, tularemia.

In an attempt to cover the tracks, biological waste from the laboratory in Khlebodarskoye was taken 120 km away towards the western border of Ukraine to the area of Tarutino and Berezino settlements. Defense Ministry of Russia keeps record of all these facts in order to have them legally assessed at a later stage.

We also must mention the emergency destruction of documents in Kherson biological laboratory. One of the reasons for such a rush may be the need to conceal from Russian experts the information about an outbreak of dirofilariasis, a disease transmitted by mosquitoes, that occurred in Kherson in 2019. Four cases of infection were detected in February, which is unusual for the life cycle of these insects, even taking into account the incubation period of the disease. We are also aware that in April 2018, representatives of the Pentagon visited local healthcare institutions, where they got acquainted with the results of the epidemiological investigation and copied medical documentation.

Western media, who readily perceive any fakes presented by Ukrainian authorities with the support of their Western sponsors, doubt authenticity of the materials published by our Ministry of Defense. In this regard, let me draw your attention to the following fact. All documents we published had been signed by real US officials. Many of them were signed by head of the DTRA office at the US Embassy in Kiev Joanna Wintrall. This representative of the Pentagon is well known in the non-proliferation circles. Prior to Ukraine, she addressed

elimination of chemical weapons in Libya. If journalists have doubts as to the authenticity of documents that we shared, I suggest they ask her directly whether this is really her signature on them.

I repeat that it is not just about Ukraine and the United States violating the BTWC. It is about evidence of high-risk military biological activity that has been underway in the middle of Eastern Europe until recently. Its implications could have “spilled” beyond the borders of Ukraine and even the entire region at any point. It is hard to imagine what toll it would have taken, i.a. on the European states. Perhaps it would have outmatched even the COVID-19 pandemic.

We already see alarming signs of such threat. For example, a sharp increase in cases of tuberculosis caused by new multi-resistant strains was detected among citizens living in Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics in 2018. During a mass outbreak recorded in the area of Peski settlement, more than 70 cases of the disease were detected, which ended in a rapid fatal outcome. This does not look like a coincidence.

In conclusion, let me comment on the words of UN Secretariat representatives who claim to have no proofs of military-purpose biological programs being carried out in Ukraine.

Under the BTWC, member states submit to the United Nations data regarding biological facilities and related activity. I mean confidence-building measures that are published for the purposes of monitoring the implementation of the Convention. Since 2016, the moment Ukraine embarked on the mentioned projects, including UP-4, UP-8, and P-781, both the United States and Ukraine have knowingly omitted those projects from their reviews, even despite their clear military biological orientation.

That is why Russia for many years has been calling to strengthen the BTWC regime, adopt a legally binding protocol to the Convention that would allow to create an effective verification mechanism and bind member states to report on their military biological activity abroad. The United States has been opposed to this work for almost 20 years now and refused to provide such data. By the way, this is yet another question that US representatives evade answering.

The facts that we shared today and on 11 March are only the tip of the iceberg. Our Defense Ministry continues to receive and analyze new materials. We will keep the global community updated on the issue of Pentagon’s illegal activity in Ukraine.

Thank you.

Right of reply:

Mr.President,

Propaganda, disinformation, amateurism, baseless allegations, false flag operation – that’s what we heard today. Some statements repeated what was said on 11 March almost word-by-word. If you found nothing new in our today’s statement, you either were not listening or did not hear what we were saying. What we presented were not the conspiracy theories that we pried out of the deep abyss of the Internet. Those were new materials and documents that we had circulated among UNSC members. These documents elaborate on biological cooperation between Ukraine and the United States. I ask you to read those materials. If you can refute them, please do it. But do it by answering our questions rather than by spouting baseless allegations about Russian propaganda. You refuse to do this because you have nothing to say. Instead, you try accusing us of plans to use biological and chemical weapons in Ukraine. This is the height of cynicism. We already warned you that we had information that Ukrainian nationalists had delivered toxic chemical agents to some areas of Ukraine in order to carry out a provocation and blame Russia. This is what you call a false flag operation.

As I said, you, in particular the United States, did not listen carefully to us. We did not say (as the US representative would interpret it) that Ukraine had a military biological program of its own. We said the United States had such program, where Ukraine was used blindly. We cited facts about the growing incidence of dangerous diseases in Ukraine that could not be explained by simpler factors, but could be related to this sort of activity.

We heard again that the best argument you have to prove that no military biological activity was carried out in Ukraine is the opinion of the UN Secretariat. But as mentioned already, the United Nations cannot be aware of secret military biological programs. Those who implement them do not report it to the UN or whoever.

We do not lift this issue from the agenda. More facts will surely arrive soon, and we will keep the Security Council and the global community posted.

Thank you.