

# Chemical and Biological News

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## UN still sees no sign of biological weapons in Ukraine

27 October 2022

This marked the third time since the 24 February invasion that the Council has formally met at Russia's request to address its ongoing allegations. The UN's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumu Nakamitsu, had previously informed ambassadors – first in March, and then again in May – that the UN had seen no evidence of biological weapons use in Ukraine.

“This remains the case today,” her Deputy, Adedeji Ebo, told the Council. “I would also like to note that the United Nations currently has neither the mandate nor the technical or operational capacity to investigate this information,” he added. Both Russia and Ukraine are parties to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

Mr. Ebo reported on the proceedings of a formal consultative meeting in Geneva, requested by Russia, under Article V of the Convention and the Final Declarations of its Second and Third Review Conferences. “The Meeting heard the presentation by the Russian Federation of its Article V consultation request regarding 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,” he said.

Both Ukraine and the US responded in the meeting, which ended without consensus. This week, Russia lodged a formal

complaint to the Security Council under Article VI of the Convention, stating that Ukraine and the US had not provided “necessary explanations”. Article VI allows States Party to request the Council to investigate breaches of the Convention. Countries would have to cooperate in any Council investigation.

Mr. Ebo reported that since the BWC entered into force, provisions of Article VI have never been invoked. “The Convention does not provide any guidance on the type of investigation that the Council may initiate. States Parties have also not developed any specific guidance or procedures concerning the modalities to be employed for the purposes of an Article VI investigation,” he said. The top official underlined the UNODA's readiness to support any investigation initiated by the Council.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1129952>

## Moscow urges UN probe into Ukrainian biolabs

25 Oct, 2022

Russia is calling on the UN Security Council to establish a commission to investigate alleged violations of the convention prohibiting the production or use of biological weapons by Ukraine and the United States.

*“We requested a meeting in two days in line with Article VI of the Biological Weapons Convention,”* the Russian mission to the United Nations said. Moscow's ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, circulated a draft resolution ahead of a meeting set for Thursday, along with *“a variety of documents and evidence that shed light on the true nature of military biological*

*activities of the US and Ukraine on the Ukrainian territory.”*

Russia was forced to invoke Article VI of the convention to raise the issues with the Security Council after its repeated inquiries were largely ignored by Washington and Kiev, who *“have not provided necessary explanations, nor have they taken immediate measures to remedy the situation,”* Nebenzia explained.

Moscow has alleged that the two countries conducted secretive, joint biological research on Ukrainian soil, claiming it had obtained incriminating evidence of those activities during the ongoing military operation. The Russian Defense Ministry has gradually released said materials to the public in batches since March. *“The data analysis gives evidence of non-compliance by the American and Ukrainian sides with the provisions”* of the BWC, Nebenzia said.

<https://www.rt.com/news/565341-russia-un-ukraine-biological-laboratories/>

### **High Representative’s briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic**

25 October 2022

Since the last consideration of this matter by the Council and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. On 24 October 2022, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General to receive an update on developments and ascertain his views.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic have not progressed since the Council last met on this issue. Unfortunately, all efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to organise the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority continue to be unsuccessful.

As Council members were previously informed, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the DAT since 2019, with the aim of assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving the 20 outstanding issues.

As has been stressed on a monthly basis for many years now, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. 2 The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to ensuring the complete implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of all its declaration requirements and to assisting Syria in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, OPCW policy-making organs’ decisions, and Security Council resolution 2118. I take this opportunity to reiterate my support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

<https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/High-Representatives-briefing-to-the-Security-Council-on-the-implementation-of-Security-Council-resolution-2118-2013-on-the-elimination->

*of-the-chemical-weapons-programme-of-the-Syrian-Arab-Republic-1.pdf*

## **FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Releases Strategy to Strengthen Health Security and Prepare for Biothreats**

OCTOBER 18, 2022

President Joe Biden will sign National Security Memorandum-15 (NSM-15) and launched the *National Biodefense Strategy and Implementation Plan for Countering Biological Threats, Enhancing Pandemic Preparedness, and Achieving Global Health Security* (the Strategy).

As the President has said, there are no walls high enough or oceans wide enough to keep out biothreats and protect our communities. The Strategy reflects the Biden-Harris Administration's comprehensive plan to protect our nation from future pandemics and biological threats. It outlines a set of bold goals to transform the nation's biodefenses and health security by launching a whole-of-government effort across 20 Federal Agencies to detect, prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from biological incidents, in partnership with our international, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners. NSM-15 supports execution of the strategy by strengthening the coordination of biodefense efforts across government.

Infectious diseases that cross borders and disrupt societies are a threat to our national security and global stability. COVID-19 is the latest example of how biological threats can devastate communities across America and around the world, resulting in millions of deaths and trillions of dollars of economic losses globally. In addition to COVID-19, the global community is concurrently fighting outbreaks of monkeypox, polio, Ebola, highly

pathogenic avian influenza, and other diseases, stretching thin global resources and demonstrating gaps in our current preparedness. And, the risks of weaponization of biological agents are expanding.

The United States must be prepared for outbreaks from any source – whether naturally occurring, accidental, or deliberate in origin. Urbanization, climate change, and habitat encroachment increase the risk of an outbreak emerging from animal reservoirs. Global interconnectedness accelerates the speed at which infectious diseases spread across the world, especially when coupled with overwhelmed health systems. Furthermore, the norm against the development and use of biological weapons has been challenged by state and non-state actors over the past several decades.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/10/18/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-releases-strategy-to-strengthen-health-security-and-prepare-for-biothreats/>

## **Remarks at the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction**

October 5, 2022

We also urge all GP members to condemn and call out Russia's deplorable disinformation campaigns, to include the blatant lies that falsely allege the use of CBRN weapons by the Ukrainians and biological weapons activities by the United States and other GP [Global Partnership] members. These claims are patently false and seek to undermine international cooperation and assistance under the BWC's Article X provision. We are grateful to those GP members who spoke up during the recent BWC Article V formal meeting to support the

United States, Ukraine, and our peaceful partnership.

It goes without saying that the United States views biological safety and security as a major priority and is grateful to Germany for its leadership on this topic. We are very proud of this year's deliverables and of the work of the Africa Signature Initiative. We similarly support the role the GP plays in strengthening and reinforcing the BWC, particularly through the BWC Implementation Support Unit's project under the Signature Initiative. Finally, we call upon members to endorse measures at the BWC's Ninth Review Conference to enhance compliance, increase transparency, promote confidence, and strengthen the operationalization of the BWC, and to support an experts' working group to study these issues and identify concrete steps to strengthen implementation.

Responding to Russia's unprovoked war and increasing biosafety and biosecurity capabilities worldwide are priorities for the United States, but they are not the only issues confronting us, or the GP. We must also advance security priorities related to chemical and missile threats, especially those emanating from North Korea, the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, as well as export controls and other measures to address the rapid evolution of sensitive dual-use technologies. These are but some of the challenges confronting this group, but none of us can do it alone. We have a strong collective record to build upon and the United States is strongly, unequivocally, and passionately committed to doing our part.

<https://www.state.gov/remarks-at-the-global-partnership-against-the-spread-of-weapons-and-materials-of-mass-destruction/>

## **Russia floats bioweapons proposal**

Sep 19, 2022

Russia has urged amendments to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), floating three ideas to reinforce the landmark international agreement and make it more legally binding for its parties. The proposals were announced on Monday by Igor Kirillov, who heads Russia's Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defense Troops.

The proposals were designed after a meeting of BCW member states in Geneva that were held earlier this month, Kirillov told a media briefing. The meeting was convened by Russia, which has accused the US and Ukraine of violating the agreement. Moscow has raised allegations against the two countries of conducting secretive biological research on Ukrainian soil, claiming it had obtained incriminating evidence during the ongoing military operation. The Russian military has repeatedly released said materials to the public in batches since March.

"The participants of the meeting were provided copies of real documents previously publicized by the Russian Defense Ministry, as well as with material evidence confirming the implementation of military biological programs on the territory of Ukraine," Kirillov said. "None of the delegations had any doubts about the authenticity of the submitted documents, including in terms of the accumulation of pathogenic materials in Ukrainian laboratories," he added.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/563119-moscow-bioweapons-convention-proposal/>

## **Russian soldiers in Ukraine hospitalized with severe chemical poisoning – Moscow**

Aug 20, 2022

Several Russian soldiers involved in the military operation in Ukraine have been hospitalized with severe chemical poisoning, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Saturday. Traces of Botulinum toxin Type B, which is an *“organic poison of artificial origin,”* have been discovered in samples taken from the servicemen, the ministry said, accusing Kiev of *“chemical terrorism.”*

The Russian troops were *“hospitalized with signs of severe poisoning”* after being stationed near the village of Vasilyevka in Zaporozhye Region on July 31, the statement said. *“The Zelensky regime has authorized terrorist attacks with the use of toxic substances against Russian personnel and civilians”* following a string of military defeats in Donbass and other areas, the ministry insisted.

Moscow plans to send laboratory tests from the soldiers to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Botulinum toxin, often called the *“miracle poison,”* is one of the most toxic biological substances known to science. Produced by the Clostridium botulinum bacteria, it blocks the release of the acetylcholine neurotransmitter, causing muscle paralysis.

Botulinum toxin Type A has been used in medicine in small doses in recent decades, especially to treat disorders characterized by overactive muscle movement. It's also well known in cosmetology under its shortened name, Botox.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/561214-ukraine-chemical-poisoning-moscow/>

## **Detailed information of Japanese army's notorious chemical warfare unit made public in China for first time on 77th anniversary of Japan's WWII surrender**

Aug 15, 2022

The complete name list and personal information of all the 414 members of the Japanese army's Kwantung Army Chemical Department, also known as Unit 516, which researched and developed lethal chemical weapons during World War II (WWII), were made public in China for the first time on Monday, serving as important new historical evidence for the study on Japan's chemical warfare history.

Monday marks the 77th anniversary of Japan's defeat and unconditional surrender in WWII. The Exhibition Hall of Evidences of Crime Committed by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army located in Harbin, Northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, disclosed the registered information of all the 414 members of Unit 516 which the Japanese army first set up in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang, on May 11, 1939.

Unit 516 mainly focused on the research and development of a series of toxic substances, including the strong erosive mustard gas, the quick erosive lewisite, asphyxiating chloric acid gas and the application of these toxic chemical in actual combats.

According to Jin Chengmin, curator of the exhibition hall, the registration book was completed around 1945. A total of 237 pages were compiled containing 414 members' names, birthdates, household registrations, types of services, arm of the services, as well as their relatives' residences and their relationships, which can reveal the basic historical facts including the entire scale of the Unit 516 and the composition of the

personnel and their ranks. “Like the biological warfare, chemical warfare by Japan was a top-down, premeditated, well-organized and a systematic national crime which violated international morality and human conscience,” Jin told media.

According to Jin, the total number of the members of Unit 516 is not 250 as was originally claimed but was as many as 414 that is so far reachable. Its core members were high-rank officers and its professionals came from medical schools and army hospitals. While the notorious Unit 731 killed and harmed Chinese civilians with biological weapons, Unit 516 adopted chemical weapons and they were referred to as a pair of “devil brothers,” Gao Xiaoyan, a research fellow with Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, told media.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202208/1273071.shtml>

### **ISIS planned chemical attacks in Europe, new details on weapons program reveal**

Joby Warrick, July 11, 2022

In the summer of 2014, as his followers were ravaging the cities of northern Iraq, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi convened a secret meeting with a weapons expert whose unusual skills the terrorist chief was anxious to acquire.

His guest was a small man, barely above 5 feet tall, and he had only recently been freed from a years-long stint in U.S. and Iraqi prisons. But before that, Salih al-Sabawi had been an Iraqi official of some renown: a Russian-trained engineer who had once helped President Saddam Hussein build his extensive arsenal of chemical weapons.

Baghdadi had summoned Sabawi, 52, to offer him a job. If supplied with the right

equipment and resources, could he produce the same weapons for the Islamic State? Sabawi’s reply, according to a later intelligence report about the meeting, was yes. He could do that and more.

Thus began what U.S. and Iraqi Kurdish officials describe as a crash effort aimed at building the biggest arsenal of chemical and, potentially, biological weapons ever assembled by a terrorist group. Within six months, under Sabawi’s direction, the Islamic State would manufacture mustard gas, a chemical weapon from the World War I era, as well as bombs and rockets filled with chlorine.

But Sabawi’s ambitions, and by extension Baghdadi’s, were much broader, according to newly disclosed details on the Islamic State weapons program. Iraqi Kurdish intelligence reports, seen by The Washington Post, shed new light on the role played by Sabawi, a mysterious figure known within the terrorist group as Abu Malik, and the ambitious plan by Islamic State leaders to develop and use weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and abroad.

New insights also are emerging from a U.N. investigation that is combing through millions of pages of Islamic State records as it seeks evidence of the group’s war crimes. In addition, several current and former U.S. officials in interviews with The Post spoke for the first time in detail about an urgently planned military operation, conducted in 2015 by U.S. Special Operations forces with assistance from Kurdish Peshmerga operatives, to kill Sabawi and crush the weapons program before it reached maturity.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/07/11/isis-chemical-biological-weapons/>

## **US bio-labs overseas: Time to open the doors**

By Xin Ping, Apr 29, 2022

The Yongsan US military base in Seoul, the ROK, was surrounded by ROK citizens shouting “Shut down the bio-labs!” It was not the first time that such protests took place in a country in which US troops are based. But the date of this campaign made it different. It was April 10, 2022, the 50th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

From the GG-21 Program in Georgia to the JUPITR Biochemical Experimentation Program in the ROK, biochemical experimental programs controlled by Washington have been exposed one after another. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. The US, a self-proclaimed “beacon of democracy,” stands out in conducting dangerous biological experiments and expanding its bio-military empire to the whole world. Recently, a total of 5,629 contracts about US overseas biological laboratories were revealed. And the documents have so much to disclose.

The discrepancy in the number of overseas bio-labs would be an interesting start to a journey of discovery. The US openly admitted that it runs 336 biological laboratories in 30 countries around the world, including 26 in Ukraine. However, the contracts suggest that the US has signed contracts with 49 countries, way more than it had admitted. According to Igor Kirillov, Chief of Russia’s radiation, chemical and biological protection force, the US has formed a network of more than 30 biological laboratories in Ukraine, which is also more than the US version of the tally.

In one instance of contract with Ukraine, there is a paragraph that goes, “preventing

the proliferation of technology, pathogens and expertise that are located at facilities in Ukraine and that could be used in the development of biological weapons.” The wording sounds neutral indeed. But considering the shadowy lab operations and curious coincidences, this admonishment is more like an admission of a standard laboratory practice. It is particularly so when the media outlets all over the world have covered crises in places where US bio-labs are located. The Time of Israel reported that the secret human body experiments in Georgia’s Lugar Research Center had caused a number of deaths. In BBC’s report, the US troops in the ROK conducted tests on a variety of highly toxic substances, including live anthrax, without informing the ROK government and local citizens. Reuters reported that, on the day the Russian-Ukrainian conflict broke out, the US-controlled biological laboratory in Ukraine urgently destroyed deadly pathogens, including anthrax and rat plague.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1260665.shtml>

## **A legacy of ‘secrecy and deception’: Why Russia clings to an outlawed chemical arsenal**

By Joby Warrick, March 19, 2022

On July 12, 2018, British scientists gathered at a restricted military base for a first look at the weapon used in a bizarre murder attempt a few weeks before. The device was a perfume bottle, tossed away by the assailants as they fled the country, and containing less than a tablespoon of a liquid so deadly that it could only be handled with heavy rubber gloves and hazmat gear.

Investigators already suspected that the weapon was of Russian origin — the intended victim was a Russian ex-spy living in

England, and the attackers were identified as military intelligence operatives from Moscow. The surprise, as the examination unfolded, was the sheer potency of the oily fluid inside the vial. It was enough poison, the scientists calculated, to wipe out a small town: the equivalent of thousands of lethal doses.

This was Novichok, a powerful nerve agent invented by Russia. Just a year earlier, in 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin had declared to the world that his country no longer possessed such chemical weapons. U.S. and British intelligence officials believed at the time that Putin was lying, and here, in a laboratory in southern England, was tangible proof. Russia had secretly preserved at least some of its arsenal of poisons, and it clearly was willing to use them — including on foreign soil.

Four years later, insights from the probe into the attempted assassination of defector Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England, are helping to fuel worries that Russian chemical weapons could soon turn up in yet another country, with far graver consequences. The Biden administration has repeatedly warned that Russia, frustrated with the faltering progress of its 3-week-old invasion of Ukraine, may be preparing to use chemical weapons against Ukrainian troops, political leaders or even ordinary civilians in an effort to regain momentum and seize control of key cities.

While the nature of those preparations is not publicly known, current and former U.S. and NATO officials say Russia has long possessed an array of chemical weapons, which it retains in defiance of international treaties and despite years of Russian promises and pronouncements. Moreover, senior Russian leaders appear to regard chemical weapons as a legitimate tool for achieving a variety of goals, from eliminating political foes to

subduing armed opponents, officials and weapons experts say. Russia denies possessing chemical weapons, and the Kremlin has accused Kyiv and Washington of plotting to use chemical or biological weapons in Ukraine.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/03/19/russia-chemical-weapons-ukraine/>

## **China backs Russian allegations about US biological weapons**

### **Beijing's official news agency repeats claims America is trying to spread pathogens through animals**

#### **William Langley in Hong Kong and Edward White in Seoul**

March 14, 2022

Chinese diplomats and prominent state media have repeated Russian disinformation reports about US-run biological laboratories in Ukraine, deepening tensions between Washington and Beijing ahead of a critical security meeting in Europe. Yang Jiechi, China's top foreign policy official, and Jake Sullivan, US national security adviser, met in Rome, the first face-to-face meeting between senior China and US officials since Russian president Vladimir Putin ordered troops into Ukraine. The talks come against a backdrop of rising frustration in the west over China's relationship with Russia and Beijing's refusal to condemn the invasion. The Financial Times reported on Monday that Russia has asked China for military equipment to support its invasion of Ukraine, sparking concern in the White House that Beijing could undermine western efforts to help Ukrainian forces defend their country.

However, China's official rhetoric on the Ukraine conflict over the weekend

concentrated on allegations that the US was using Ukraine to research dangerous pathogens and biological weapons. Xinhua, the official state news agency, on Sunday published a “satellite investigation”, posting satellite images of supposed US labs identified by Russia. Xinhua repeated Russian claims that the US was seeking to learn how to spread pathogens through animals. The Global Times, a nationalist tabloid, ran a story based on an article published in Russian daily newspaper Izvestia, in which an unnamed former Ukrainian official claimed that Ukraine had a network of military research facilities under the supervision of its security services and modernised by the US.

The reports appeared after Zhang Jun, China’s permanent envoy to the UN, on Friday dismissed the US assertion that the biological laboratories allegations were “groundless”. He said the “concerns raised by Russia should be properly addressed”. “The US always says they advocate transparency. If they believe the relevant information is fake, they can just provide us with relevant data for clarification, so that the international community can draw a conclusion by itself,” Zhang said. The Chinese foreign ministry has also backed the claims, with spokesperson Zhao Lijian telling reporters in Beijing that US “biological military activities” in Ukraine are “merely the tip of the iceberg”.

<https://www.ft.com/content/3f9b8164-e9d6-4dfd-880a-f4fa96966439>