

**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**

**Statement to the Article V Consultative Meeting
Under the Biological and Toxin Weapons
Convention By Kingston Reif, Deputy Assistant
Secretary of Defense, Threat Reduction and Arms
Control, United States Department of Defense**

Submitted by the United States of America

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates

1. My name is Kingston Reif, and I serve as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Threat Reduction and Arms Control in the U.S. Department of Defense. It is my honor to be part of the U.S. delegation to this meeting.
2. Through my role, I have unique insight into the treaty-related activities of the Department of Defense, as well as the activities conducted by the Department through its Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.
3. Let me be clear and definitive - the United States has consistently worked to create a world without biological weapons. The Department of Defense does not engage in, support, or condone the development of biological weapons. Not in the United States, not in Ukraine, and not anywhere else in the world.
4. As we stated in our written response to the request of the Russian Federation, the United States is in full compliance with its obligations under the convention.
5. Despite how the Russian Federation attempts to falsely portray the Department of Defense's program, the initiatives this program supports play a critical role in improving human and animal health in Ukraine. At the same time, this program has focused more and more on supporting countries seeking to build their own capacities that strengthen global health security.
6. You will hear more from my colleagues about the program's cooperative efforts with Ukraine, and why Russia's allegations are baseless. I want to focus on the common mischaracterization that underpins all their allegations.
7. Through all their claims, the message that the Russian Federation hopes you will believe is simple - any public health assistance by the Department of Defense is suspicious.
8. In other words, they want you to believe that involvement in public health by a military must inherently be for some secretive purpose.



9. The government of the Russian Federation may operate that way. However, I am here today to explain to you why that leap in logic is fundamentally wrong.
10. First, I must describe the Department of Defense's early pioneering work in disaster relief and public health. This work has led to the Department developing a tremendous level of technical expertise. This expertise is now leveraged by programs like the Department's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program to defend us – all of us – from the threat of infectious disease outbreaks.
11. For example, following particularly devastating natural disasters, relief efforts provided by DoD reduce the threat to human life, the threat of regional instability, and the threat of possible war.
12. I would like to highlight just one example of how the Department of Defense contributes to humanitarian and disaster relief capabilities. Following the Indian Ocean earthquake and ensuing tsunami in December 2004, DoD launched Operation Unified Assistance to dispatch the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and its support ships, as well as the Navy hospital ship *Mercy* to the coasts of Sumatra and Indonesia to aid in response and recovery efforts.
13. The hospital ship *Mercy* has continued to provide life-saving missions all over the world. This very day, the *Mercy* is participating in Pacific Partnership 22. Now in its 17th year following that tsunami, this annual mission builds regional partnerships to provide medical, dental, and veterinary care in the event of major disasters.
14. DoD's forward positioning of these types of critical platforms and personnel provides life-saving aid immediately following natural disasters, such as recent earthquakes, tsunamis, and flooding.
15. The Department of Defense also has a long history of leading research and global outreach defending against infectious diseases.
16. The U.S. government leverages the technical capabilities within DoD to build international defenses against one of the most destabilizing global security concerns – the out of control spread of infectious diseases.
17. Over a hundred years ago, U.S. Army Surgeon Major Walter Reed discovered the causes of yellow fever and led efforts to eradicate the disease in the United States and around the world. Early U.S. military medical research also developed the first vaccine against typhoid fever, as well as developing the technology of chlorine-based water treatment systems, used by most cities in the world today, to defend against water-borne diseases.
18. In more recent times, when the Ebola virus emerged in West Africa, the Department of Defense leveraged its expertise and resources to save lives and prevent the further spread of the outbreak.
19. The Department launched Operation United Assistance – the most significant DoD operation, before COVID-19, to support a foreign humanitarian assistance mission in response to an infectious disease. Through programs like the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, DoD contributed nearly \$500 million of the total \$2.3 billion United States effort to contain the spread of the disease.
20. DoD's efforts during the outbreak and since have enhanced regional laboratory capacity, supplied personal protective equipment and other life-saving measures, improved diagnostic capability, and strengthened biosafety and biosecurity.
21. It is important to note that afterward, the World Health Organization said that this outbreak "served as a reminder that the world is ill-prepared for a large and sustained disease outbreak."
22. Just a few years later, a novel corona-virus emerged. The Department of Defense has continued to contribute its top scientists to develop diagnostic tests, therapeutics, and vaccines. DoD has also leveraged its incredible logistics capabilities to deliver these critically-needed medical supplies and personal protective equipment all over the world, including to many of the countries represented here today. These efforts have provided for

our collective defense and have enabled medical professionals around the world to stay in the fight against COVID-19, reduce the rate of its spread, and minimize human suffering.

23. We will never be able to prevent all infectious disease outbreaks from occurring. But, if we can collectively contain an outbreak at its source and prevent it from spreading, the human and financial toll can be much less.

24. Rather than just investing in pandemic response, the U.S. government believes in leveraging its unique capabilities to help strengthen global public and animal health systems as a means of proactive prevention of pandemics so that we all do not have to bear the greater cost of a reactive response.

25. The fact is that the United States government uses all resources at its disposal to conduct peaceful, life-saving activities, such as public and animal health initiatives.

26. One resource is the Department of Defense, who is working cooperatively in Ukraine and with other partners around the globe: to help prevent the accidental or intentional spread of infectious disease and create an early warning system for natural outbreaks.

27. The U.S. government believes in the power of scientific collaboration and cooperation. Science and public health transcend international politics – or at least they should.

28. Through collaborative programs like the DoD CTR Program, the U.S. Government provides assistance to countries so they can better reduce the risk of biological outbreaks in their territory, their region, and ultimately, the globe.

29. The DoD Cooperative Threat Reduction Program was originally born out of the fall of the Soviet Union when unsecured stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, as well as the facilities and people that made them, were at risk of falling into the wrong hands.

30. After 20 years, and as the program with Russia was ending, the mission shifted focus to preventing weapons of mass destruction from being made in the first place. The program also began efforts to further reduce the risk from infectious disease outbreaks.

31. The program emphasized promoting safe laboratories by implementing biosafety and biosecurity best practices in alignment with international standards. The program also supported the growth of peaceful scientific expertise to allow for the quick and accurate detection of disease outbreaks.

32. Other countries beyond the former Soviet Union began to seek out the collaborative expertise offered by this assistance program.

33. Today, DoD CTR leverages this expertise to support partner countries across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia develop and refine their own domestic capabilities to prevent, detect, and respond to the spread of biological threats, both within their own borders and beyond.

34. The program has enabled partners to independently diagnose, detect, report, and understand the spread of infectious human, animal, and zoonotic diseases. Infectious diseases such as Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, cholera, African Swine Fever, and highly pathogenic avian influenza can negatively impact the health and wellness of not only local and regional populations, but also their food and water resources, which may lead to larger regional conflict.

35. In Ukraine, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the public and animal health facilities needed assistance to meet standards for biosafety and biosecurity. They simply did not offer the level of protection needed to safely conduct necessary infectious disease diagnosis. Through our partnership, the CTR Program has built, upgraded, and renovated facilities for Ukrainian public and animal health professionals so that they can operate in laboratories that meet international standards.

36. It is critically important to note, however, that these facilities, at all times, remain under the ownership, operational control, and jurisdiction of our partner countries – not the Department of Defense.

37. Ukraine and other countries must be able to develop the techniques and expertise to fight the spread of infectious disease through stronger public and animal health systems. And the Department of Defense is committed to helping make that possible. Through these efforts, the DoD CTR Program's activities directly support Article X of the BWC.

38. As you will hear in the subsequent technical briefings, one of the ways we do this is by supporting collaborative scientific work. This work is led by local scientists to study local problems and to guard against and prepare for future problems. The Department provides the financial and technical assistance to help local scientists advance their understanding of infectious disease in their country and how it spreads; advance their ability to diagnose, detect, and report outbreaks; and advance their ability to contribute to science on the international stage.

39. DoD believes that scientists across the world, with the facilities, expertise, and equipment necessary to safely and securely conduct quality science benefits our collective security from biological outbreaks.

40. This is the goal of the United States government, and the Department of Defense leverages its resources to contribute to meeting that goal.

41. I must make note that over the next five years, DoD is committed to spending over \$1.25 billion U.S. dollars in the DoD Cooperative Threat Reduction Program to strengthen the global public and animal health systems around the world with our partners and allies.

42. In summary, Distinguished Ambassadors and Delegates, DoD is working with Ukraine to help leverage the power of science and prevent the potentially devastating consequences of infectious disease outbreaks, regardless to whatever false allegation the Russian Federation might make to the contrary.

43. I request that this statement be included as an Official Document of this Article V meeting, and that it be posted by the Implementation Support Unit on the UN Geneva public website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
