



Russian Defense against Infectious Disease

OE Watch Commentary: Russian health care has improved after the devastation of the 1990s, although outside of major cities, problems remain with getting prompt medical treatment in modern facilities. Poor prophylactic care in the provinces also aggravates the spread of infectious diseases. For instance, as the first accompanying excerpt from the pro-business daily, *RBK* points out, in 2017, “Russia was recognized as the leader in the rate of spread of HIV in Europe,” with over 100,000 new cases diagnosed. Globally, Russia has been rated in the bottom third of ranking for public health.

Statistics like the above, however, do not align with the current Kremlin mantra that Russia has risen off its knees and is returning to superpower status. The second excerpt, from the pro-government source, *Izvestiya*, illustrates one tactic which the Kremlin uses to explain such contradictions. The article deals with how “the specialists within the radiation, chemical and biological protection (RCBZ) of the Armed Forces will be engaged in identifying the causes of outbreaks of infections in Russia.” These specialists will work “together with the FSB... to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional.” The excerpt includes a quote from a military expert who alleges that “in the age of hybrid wars, the role of such [biological] weapons is greatly increasing.” He goes on to identify the likely culprit, by asserting that “the United States has been deploying biochemical and biological laboratories in neighboring states [of Russia] the purpose of which is declared with deliberate distortion.”

The article insinuates that the US is responsible for “the appearance of infectious diseases, which we did not have before,” to “include African swine fever, which was first registered in Russia in 2008.” It also alleges that the US funded Lugar Center for Public Health Research located near Tbilisi is responsible for “worsening the situation for diseases spread by insect vectors” such as “the anomalous spread of ticks which have caused outbreaks of Hemorrhagic Fever that is not typical for our latitudes, into the Stavropol Territory and the Rostov Region.”

For the past several years, the Kremlin and its pliant media juggernaut have gone to great lengths to convince the Russian people that the West (and the US in particular) will use any available vector to weaken their country. Instead of focusing upon practical measures to stop the spread of communicable sickness, the Kremlin has now directed its security and military services “to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Source: “Россию признали лидером по темпу распространения ВИЧ в Европе (Russia recognized as the leader in the rate of spread of HIV in Europe),” *RBK*, 29 November 2018. <https://www.rbc.ru/society/29/11/2018/5bff027b9a7947e9cd717697>

The leaders in the rate of spread of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among European countries were Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.... Specialists recorded a total of about 160,000 new HIV cases last year, 130,000 in Eastern Europe, with the vast majority of cases – 104,000 diagnoses - registered in Russia.

Source: Alexei Ramm, A. Kozachenko, R. Kreptul, B. Stepovoy, “Домашний очаг: Минобороны установит причины аномальных эпидемий (The Home Hearth: The Ministry of Defense will Establish the Causes of Anomalous Epidemics),” *Izvestiya*, 4 December 2018. <https://iz.ru/816754/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-roman-kretcul-bogdan-stepovoi/domashnii-ochag-minoborony-ustanovit-prichiny-anomalnykh-epidemii>

Possible cases of use of biological weapons will be investigated by the Ministry of Defense together with the Federal Security Service (FSB). All emergency situations associated with outbreaks of infectious diseases of people, animals and agricultural plants on the territory of the country will fall into the sphere of increased attention. As part of the Armed Forces, they will form special educational centers where they will train military biologists. Today, the Ministry of Defense is already engaged in the suppression of foci of diseases, including anthrax, African swine fever, bird flu. In an age of hybrid wars, it is necessary to recognize and prevent the threats of the intentional spread of infections in time....

It is planned that the specialists of the troops of radiation, chemical and biological protection (RCBZ) of the Armed Forces will be engaged in identifying the causes of outbreaks of infections in Russia. We are talking about diseases of both people and animals, as well as agricultural plants.... Military biologists and intelligence agencies will need to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional. On this will depend on the tactics of dealing with them....

*...Bacteriological and biological activities of the RCBZ troops are now particularly relevant, says military expert in the field of chemical and biological weapons, Oleg Zheltonozhko. “In the age of hybrid wars, the role of such weapons is greatly increasing,” he told *Izvestiya*. - It is very difficult to prove its use as an act of aggression, therefore such threats must be recognized in time. It is no secret that in the neighboring states of the United States, it is deploying biochemical and biological laboratories, the purpose of which is declared with deliberate distortion.*

In addition, in recent years, cases of the appearance of infectious diseases, which we did not have before, are increasingly recorded. These include African swine fever, which was first registered in Russia in 2008. RCBZ troops have special methods to determine the origin and paths of infection, the expert said.

This year, the Russian Ministry of Defense officially announced that the situation in the region where the bacteriological center of Lugar is located near Tbilisi, which is funded by the United States, is worsening the situation for diseases spread by insect vectors. In particular, the anomalous spread of ticks has already been the cause of outbreaks of the Hemorrhagic Fever Crimea – Congo, which is not typical for our latitudes, in the Stavropol Territory and the Rostov Region....

“Military biologists and intelligence agencies will need to find out the causes of the outbreak of infectious diseases and find out whether it is intentional. On this will depend on the tactics of dealing with them.”