

# FACT SHEET

## The Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction Program - Biological Threat Reduction Program Activities in Ukraine

**Overview:** The Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), part of the Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, is implemented by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). Since 2005, BTRP has partnered with the Government of Ukraine to support peaceful and safe biological detection and diagnostic capabilities and to reduce the threats posed by pathogens.

### **Key Facts:**

- Public health facilities and biological laboratories around the world maintain and study pathogens to be able to confirm outbreaks of disease and to improve early detection and diagnostic capabilities. These facilities use specific pathogens because they are endemic to their country, or because they are at risk of spread from other countries. All member countries of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) must have such capabilities to detect and respond to disease threats. This is a basic capability for national health security.
- The United States, through BTRP, has invested approximately \$200 million in Ukraine since 2005, supporting 46 Ukrainian laboratories, health facilities, and diagnostic sites. BTRP has improved Ukraine's biological safety, security and surveillance for both human and animal health. By supporting safer and more effective disease detection, this assistance directly improved Ukraine's COVID-19 response. BTRP partners with the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other health institutions in providing this assistance.
- DoD's CTR Program began its biological work with Ukraine to reduce the risk posed by the former Soviet Union's illegal biological weapons program, which left Soviet successor states with unsecured biological materials after the fall of the USSR. DoD's CTR program works with many partner countries to reduce the threat that pathogens could be misused, stolen or accidentally released. DoD even worked closely with Russia and within Russia in laboratories owned by Russia until 2014.
- DoD CTR has worked cooperatively and peacefully with the government of Ukraine to increase biosecurity and biosafety at these sites to ensure pathogens do not pose a risk to the people of Ukraine or the region. The biosafety and biosecurity capacities that DoD has provided are in keeping with those required by the WHO IHR.

- DoD CTR has maintained its relationship with Ukraine through the present day, and Ukraine uses the laboratory improvements provided by the United States and other partners to support broader public and veterinary health goals, such as monitoring the spread of COVID-19, preparing for and controlling African Swine Fever, which helped Ukrainian farmers protect their herds from infectious diseases, and protecting the food supply in Ukraine – just to mention a few of the many benefits that accrued from this partnership.
- BTRP partners with Ukraine’s Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture’s State Committee of Veterinary Medicine and National Academy of Agrarian Sciences, and has a limited engagement with Ministry of Defense confined to providing mobile diagnostic laboratories to provide on-the-ground assistance in a public health emergency.
- The Ukrainian laboratories are owned and operated by the government of Ukraine. DoD participates in a wider international partnership that includes the government of Ukraine, international organizations, such as the WHO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and other foreign partners to improve Ukraine’s ability to safely and effectively detect and report disease outbreaks.
- Scientists are encouraged to publish their research results, partner with international colleagues, and widely distribute their research and public health findings. These facilities operate in a capacity similar to state and local public health and research laboratories around the world. Furthermore, all equipment and training provided by the United States, including from DoD, is subject to U.S. export control processes, audits, and acquisition laws and regulations to ensure transparency and compliance with both U.S. and International Health Regulations.
- BTRP’s priorities in Ukraine are to help them consolidate and secure pathogens and to continue to ensure Ukraine can detect and report disease outbreaks before they pose security or stability threats.
- Russia illegally took possession of two Ukrainian-owned laboratories that BTRP upgraded in 2014 and continues to deny Ukrainian access to these facilities.
- After Russia launched its unlawful invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health responsibly ordered the safe and secure disposal of samples. These actions limit the danger of an accidental release of pathogens should Russia’s military attack laboratories, a real concern since they have attacked Ukraine’s nuclear power plants and research facilities.
- Proper disposal of samples during a war reflects responsible conduct on the part of the Ukrainians to protect the Ukrainian people and the international community from potential accidental exposure due to irresponsible Russian actions.
- On a daily basis, Russia propagates disinformation aimed at BTRP’s laboratory and capacity building efforts in former Soviet Union countries—falsely claiming that the U.S.

Department of Defense support is used to develop biological weapons. Unlike Russia, the United States and Ukraine are not developing biological weapons and are in full compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention.

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