

## Russian Disinformation on U.S.-Supported Labs in Ukraine A Brief Overview & Links to Resources

Russia has [increased its disinformation](#) which falsely claims that Ukraine may have biological and chemical weapons. This [effort](#) from the Russian government, along with support from the Chinese government, is intended to [erode trust](#) in the United States and [sow](#) doubt in the international community, and may be part of plans for Russian biological or chemical weapons attacks in Ukraine via a [false-flag operation](#).

Ukraine's long-term cooperation with the United States to enhance biological research facilities is a key element of this disinformation. The United States [cooperates with labs and health centers](#) in more than 30 countries through the Biological Threat Reduction Program. [This defense program](#) is crucial for reducing threats from natural or accidental outbreaks and the potential use of biological weapons.

### Five Key Facts

**#1 - The United States does not operate, fund, nor in any way support biological or chemical weapons activities in Ukraine:** The United States has, and continues to be, in [full compliance](#) of its obligations under both the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**#2 - Ukraine does not have biological or chemical weapons.** Ukraine has long been a staunch champion for non-proliferation. Ukrainian [biological research facilities](#) are part of this legacy. They were designed to consolidate naturally-arising dangerous pathogen samples to secure locations to avoid them being weaponized or accidentally released. They enhance Ukraine's ability to detect and track diseases and peacefully guard against the full range of biological threats.

**#3 - Russia has a long history of conducting disinformation campaigns via false allegations of biological weapons activities by the United States:** The Soviet Union [deliberately spread false accusations](#) that the United States had used biological weapons during the Cold War. Such accusations have continued in modern times under Russian President Putin to erode trust in the United States, [weaken U.S. relations](#) with partner countries, and to divert attention away from [illicit Russian activities](#) such as its use of chemical weapons in Salisbury and against Alexei Navalny.

**#4 - The spread of this disinformation is incredibly dangerous:** This disinformation may feed Russian claims of justifications for committing atrocities in Ukraine, including if Russia itself uses biological or chemical weapons, as well as raise strawman justifications for invading in the first place. It raises numerous risks to the safety of civilians, military, as well as international volunteers within Ukraine.

**#5 - Russia may be continuing past Soviet breaches of the Biological Weapons Convention:** While the Soviet Union signed onto the BWC in 1972, the Soviet Union [continued its biological weapons program](#) in direct violation of BWC obligations. Today, the [U.S. Department of State assesses](#) that Russia maintains an offensive biological weapons program.

### Resources from the Council on Strategic Risks

- CSR has developed extensive recommendations for strengthening U.S. programs that deter and defend against biological threats—including the Biological Threat Reduction Program. Many can be found in CSR's [Handbook for Ending Catastrophic Biological Risks: How the United States Can Deter Biological Weapons and Prevent Future Pandemics](#).

- Since early in the pandemic, CSR experts have researched how COVID-19 might influence actors who are interested in illegal biological weapons. This work indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic might influence certain nations to perceive biological weapons as an important strategic deterrent—in addition, they may be attracted to their potential for use in hybrid or gray-zone conflicts. Read more in CSR’s report, [\*Understanding the Threat of Biological Weapons in a World With COVID-19\*](#).
- Over the long term, the international community must recommit to norms against weapons of mass destruction and explore new methods of creating layers of multilateral cooperation that build into a strong force against chemical and biological weapons. Read more in [\*Strengthening Global Governance Against Weapons of Mass Destruction\*](#).

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**Contact CSR if we can provide assistance in countering disinformation and providing background regarding U.S. programs that reduce chemical and biological weapons risks:**

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