

Moscow Accuses U.S. of 73 Deaths at Biolab Near Southern Russia

October 05, 2018



Russian Defense Ministry Spokesman Igor Konashenkov (L) and general Igor Kirillov (Olga Balashova / TASS)

Russia has accused the United States of killing scores of people in an alleged secret biological weapons lab in the country of Georgia, a claim that a senior Russian lawmaker said would not go unanswered.

The Russian Defense Ministry [said](#) Thursday that 73 volunteers who took part in drug tests at the U.S.-funded public health research Luger Center near Tbilisi, Georgia died in 2015-2016. It [said](#) it was alerted to the allegations by a Moscow-based former security minister wanted in Georgia for purported involvement in an assassination attempt against an ex-president.

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State Duma Defense Committee chairman Vladimir Shamanov warned the U.S. of military

retaliation and called for an international inspection of the research center.

“We will take diplomatic and military measures,” the state-run TASS news agency [quoted](#) Shamanov as saying.

“We can’t just look the other way when there’s something happening that directly affects security on the southern frontiers,” he said Thursday.

Georgia has [denied](#) that the research center is a clandestine biological weapons lab as “absurd.”

The Pentagon called the allegations “obvious attempts to divert attention” on the day when the U.S., Britain and the Netherlands issued coordinated denunciations against Russia for running what they described as a global hacking campaign.

“The U.S. is not developing biological weapons in the Lugar Center,” The Associated Press [quoted](#) Pentagon spokesman Eric Pahon as saying.

Citing the Russian Defense Ministry’s claim that the spread of viral diseases from Georgia – including African swine fever since 2007 – could be connected to the Lugar Center, Shamanov called for a “comprehensive evaluation.”

“Since you baselessly accuse us of all sorts of Skripals and other acts without presenting facts, then why don’t we carry out joint inspections,” the senior lawmaker told TASS.

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