

Russia Opens Criminal Probe Against Satirist Over Virus Video

By [AFP](#)

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According to legislation hastily adopted last week, a person risks a hefty fine and up to three years in prison for harming a person's health through spreading false information. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

A Russian satirist said Tuesday he had become the target of a criminal probe over spreading false information after he joked the coronavirus had been created in a secret Siberian lab.

"Friends, a criminal case has been opened against me over yesterday's humorous video in which I'm mocking a conspiracy theory about the coronavirus originating in a Russian lab," blogger Alexander Thorn [said](#) on Twitter.

Related article: [Russians Face up to 5 Years in Jail for Spreading False Coronavirus News](#)

Earlier in the day the Investigative Committee, which probes major cases, said a criminal case

had been opened against a Twitter user for spreading false information that presents a threat to people's life and safety.

"A user of Twitter social network posted a video in which he said that the Covid-19 had been created in the Vektor state research center after which it had deliberately been spread across Russia and China with the help of an explosion," investigators said in a statement without identifying the target of the probe.

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In a two-minute video posted on Monday, Thorn satirised a series of outlandish conspiracy theories popular in Russia — from the origin of the coronavirus to the shadow government running the world and the purported harm of vaccines.

In the parody, Thorn said the explosion of a gas cylinder at the Vektor State Virology and Biotechnology Centre in September was engineered on purpose to release the coronavirus into the air and spread it across Russia and China with the help of forest fires.

"It was an operation of the shadow world government — the Freemasons — I hope you understand," he deadpanned.

The Vektor laboratory complex conducted secret biological weapons research in the Soviet era and stockpiles viruses ranging from Ebola to smallpox.

On Tuesday, Vektor head Rinat Maksyutov [told](#) President Vladimir Putin his lab was ready to start human trials of experimental coronavirus vaccines in June.

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