

US Would be Maintaining Biolabs in Indonesia

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After the Russian reports concerning biolabs in Ukraine, the topic of bioweapons research has gained global notoriety, resulting in great scrutiny. It did not take long to realize that Eastern Europe is not the only region on the planet chosen by the US to operate this type of clandestine activity. Now, evidence points to the existence of biolaboratories in Indonesia, increasing even more the concerns of the entire international society with this threat.

Before biological military research became commonplace in newspapers around the world, Indonesia was already a country that accumulated concerns about this topic. For decades, a laboratory of the NAMRU-2 (Naval Medical Research Unit Two) project operated in Jakarta. This Navy military research program is dedicated to operating biomedical activities in several countries on the Asian continent and worked in Indonesia between 1970 and 2009, when it was finally closed after the country’s government declared the existence of this type of unit as a threat to national sovereignty. The main problem is that there is evidence that, despite the official closure of the laboratory, US activities have not actually ended, with current biological research possibly going on in Indonesia without authorization from the local government.

Last month, the Indonesian newspaper Detik published an article denouncing the alleged continuity of operations, stating that at least since 2016, when US military activities in the region intensified due to Pacific Partnership drills, secret research has been maintained. Documents and photos from such drills allegedly obtained by local investigative journalists were exposed in the article, proving the existence of the research. At the time, aboard the hospital ship USS Mercy, three dogs infected with rabies and twenty-three Indonesian nationals were transferred from West Sumatra and navigated across the coast of Padang without prior authorization from the Indonesian Ministry of Health.

At first, the repercussion of the news was low, but the case gained credibility and visibility after recent statements by Fadila Supari, a renowned Indonesian cardiologist, with award-winning research at the WHO, and former minister of health of the country. According to her, although there are little documentary proofs, there is clear evidence that such activities

actually continue to take place in Indonesia. She also believes that the events of the 2016 drills were not an isolated situation, but just an episode among several clandestine actions that would be taking place, even involving cooperation between the US military, international institutes and Indonesian universities.

“I think it’s true, the research activity still exists. I can’t prove it, but from what I’ve read and heard, research activities are still going on in various forms of cooperation with research institutes and universities in Indonesia. I think the government should be aware of this”, she said during an interview this week.

It is necessary to mention how experienced in this topic Dr. Supari is. She was one of those responsible for the investigations into the activities of NAMRU-2, which led to the conclusion that the unit represented risks to Indonesian biosecurity, motivating its closure in 2009 – the year in which Supari retired from the Ministry of Health. She conducted an extensive investigation, including surprise visits to the laboratory facility, which made her an adversary to US officials. Julian Assange’s WikiLeaks website in 2010 published leaked documents in which Supari’s name could be read as the main subject of meetings between US military and diplomats in Jakarta and Washington, as she was obstructing the laboratory’s activities – which were considered to be of maximum strategic interest to the US. Finally, in 2009, Supari formally wrote a letter to the US government in which she withdrew the Indonesian Ministry of Health from the international agreement that allowed the installation of the NAMRU biolaboratory in Jakarta, allowing for its subsequent closure in the same year.

It is interesting to note how she emphasizes she believes that international institutes are also involved in such activities – which is probably a conclusion she draws from concrete investigations and data that have not yet been made public. Previously the NAMRU project was openly funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, which was committed to research related to diseases that affected the Asian continent. Today, with the data revealed by Moscow about Ukrainian biolabs, we know that several renowned institutes and companies are involved in the funding and operation of clandestine research in Eastern Europe – including big names in Big Pharma, such as Pfizer, for example. So, this may also be the case in Asia, as the existence of public (military) and private interests in the existence of these activities is evident.

Certainly, none of this data is new, but the subject was considered “controversial” until then. In 2009, the Indonesian government was heavily criticized for denouncing US activities as serious biological risks. For years, talking about the existence of biological research for military purposes was considered a conspiracy theory. Now, with the Ukrainian case, the matter has come to light and more and more information is revealed. It seems to be just the beginning of a big black box with many secrets yet to be discovered.

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