

Kazakhstan Biological Chronology

Last update: March 2009

**This chronology is no longer being updated.
For current developments, please see the Kazakhstan Biological Overview.**

This annotated chronology is based on the data sources that follow each entry. Public sources often provide conflicting information on classified military programs. In some cases we are unable to resolve these discrepancies, in others we have deliberately refrained from doing so to highlight the potential influence of false or misleading information as it appeared over time. In many cases, we are unable to independently verify claims. Hence in reviewing this chronology, readers should take into account the credibility of the sources employed here.

Inclusion in this chronology does not necessarily indicate that a particular development is of direct or indirect proliferation significance. Some entries provide international or domestic context for technological development and national policymaking. Moreover, some entries may refer to developments with positive consequences for nonproliferation.

2007-1920s

7 May 2007

On 17 April, Kazakhstan's government ratified the Convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological and toxin weapons and on their destruction. President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the legislation on 7 May 2007. Kazakhstan joining the Convention will mark yet another step toward strengthening its role as an advocate for the nonproliferation of WMD.

—"Kazakhstan's Parliament Ratifies Bioweapons Convention" Kazakhstan News Bulletin, Vol. 7 No. 16; 20 April 2007.

19 August 2006

At a 19 August 2006 meeting in Astana with US Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Kazakhstani officials indicated that the country planned to expand its biological weapon nonproliferation measures. Specifically, the country intends to create a disease surveillance system by constructing and modernizing diagnostic laboratories, improving the physical protection at biological facilities, and expanding joint research between Kazakhstani and US scientists.

—"Senior US Senator, Kazakh Security Chiefs Discuss Non-Proliferation Cooperation," BBC Monitoring International Reports, 19 August 2006; Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, www.lexis.nexis.com.

6 May 2006

On 6 May 2006, the United States and Kazakhstan signed an amendment to the Agreement between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan Concerning the Elimination of Infrastructure for Weapons of Mass Destruction.

—"Cheney visit to Kazakhstan concluded," 6 May 2006, Kazakhstan Today News Agency, <http://eng.gazeta.kz>.

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16 November 2005

On November 16, 2005, the Mazhilis (the lower house of the Kazakhstani parliament) approved a draft law allowing Kazakhstan to join the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is expected to sign the law after the Senate, the upper house of the parliament, approves the draft. —"Mazhilis odobril prisoyedineniye respubliki k konventsii o zapreshchenii bakteriologicheskogo oruzhiya" (The Mazhilis Approved the Country's Joining the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological Weapons), Kazakhstan Today News Agency, November 16, 2005; in Gazeta.kz, www.gazeta.kz.

23 August 2005

On 23 August 2005, the United States and Kazakhstan signed an amendment to the agreement between the U.S. Department of Defense and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning the elimination of infrastructure for weapons of mass destruction.

2 August 2005

On 2 August 2005, the government of Kazakhstan issued a Decree "On Certain Measures on Biotechnologies Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan," which reorganized the National Center for Biotechnology into a state enterprise and placed it under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

8 December 2004

On 8 December 2004, the United States and Kazakhstan signed an amendment to a bilateral agreement that will expand cooperation against the threat of bioterrorism through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. Nunn-Lugar assistance will have five key goals: (1) prevention of the proliferation of biological weapons expertise through the cooperative biological research program; (2) securing dangerous pathogens and strains by strengthening biosafety and biosecurity at facilities; (3) consolidation of dangerous pathogens at secure central repositories; (4) elimination of biological weapons-related equipment and infrastructure; and (5) fortification of Kazakhstan's biological threat agent detection and response system to protect against bioterror attacks.

"U.S., Kazakhstan Sign Nunn-Lugar Agreement Amendment to Prevent Biological Weapons Proliferation," 8 December 2004, States News Service; Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, <http://lexis-nexis.com>.

October 2001

The U.S. Department of Defense and the Uzbek Ministry of Defense sign an agreement allowing the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program to spend up to \$6 million to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons materials and technology from Vozrozhdeniye Island. (Most of the island falls under the jurisdiction of Uzbekistan.) Because the CTR program is prohibited by law from engaging in economic conversion or environmental remediation, the goals of the Vozrozhdeniye project are to destroy the residual viable anthrax spores in the burial pits and to dismantle the BW laboratory complex on the island.

1998

Information is revealed regarding viable anthrax spores on Vozrozhdeniye Island, which causes a new wave of concern regarding the environmental condition of the island.

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1997

U.S. specialists study the condition of the buildings, equipment, and communications infrastructure at Biomedpreparat, and conclude that a significant capital investment will be required if the facility is to be used to produce pharmaceuticals because the buildings do not meet international quality control standards for pharmaceutical production.

1997

Following the Presidential Edict "On Developing Small Business and Entrepreneurship," Biomedpreparat creates a number of limited partnerships based on its subdivisions.

December 1996

Kazakhstan and the United States sign a contract designating the provision of funds for dismantling the main and auxiliary equipment at Biomedpreparat designed for military microbiological production.

March 1996

U.S.-Kazakhstani intergovernmental negotiations continue, but this time focusing on dismantlement and destruction of remaining military equipment and systems at the Stepnogorsk facility (SNOPB), which still can pose a proliferation risk.

3 October 1995

On 3 October 1995, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of Kazakhstan signed an Agreement on the Elimination of Infrastructure for Weapons of Mass Destruction that covered projects under the Biological Weapons Proliferation Prevention Program in Kazakhstan, including biological weapons infrastructure elimination, Biosecurity and Biosafety (BS&S), and Threat Agent Detection and Response (TADR) Network, and Cooperative Biological Research.

August 1995

Specialists from the U.S. Department of Defense visit Vozrozhdeniye Island and confirm that the experimental field lab has been dismantled, the site's infrastructure destroyed, and military settlement abandoned.

1994

U.S.-Kazakhstani cooperation begins under the U.S. Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program. Under this program, the U.S. government and U.S. partner firms provide investments to Biomedpreparat totaling \$5.8 million for joint U.S.-Kazakhstani production of civilian products. However, the deal quickly fails because of mismanagement and lack of infrastructure at the facility.

1993-1994

The Kazakhstani government provides financial support (totaling \$1 million) to the SNOPB, though it appears to be insufficient to fully reconstruct the facility for civilian needs or to provide all of the former BW specialists with civilian jobs.

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1993

The SNOPB is reorganized into a joint stock company, Biomedpreparat, for which initial funding is provided by the Kazakhstani State Program on Conversion. The facility starts to produce various civilian products, though it encounters serious economic difficulties.

1993

The Presidential Edict of the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes the National Center for Biotechnology (NCB), which brings together most of the former Soviet military and civilian biotechnology facilities in Kazakhstan, among them the SNOPB and the NISKhl.

11 April 1992

Russian President Boris Yeltsin issues the edict No. 390 "On Ensuring the Implementation of International Obligations Regarding Biological Weapons," which orders that all offensive BW programs be shut down. Following the decree, the Russian government declares that the Vozrozhdeniye site is closed, the special structures will be dismantled, and within two or three years, the island will be decontaminated and transferred to Kazakhstani control.

18 January 1992

The Supreme Soviet of newly independent Kazakhstan issues the edict "On Urgent Measures for Radically Improving the Living Conditions of Aral Area Residents," under which the Vozrozhdeniye military site is officially closed.

1991-1992

Russia stops funding to the former Soviet BW centers in Kazakhstan, closes their military programs, and abandons the sites. As a result, all Soviet offensive and defensive BW programs on Kazakhstani territory stop working. The Kazakhstani government, with assistance from the international community, begins the process of dismantlement and/or conversion of the four BW facilities on its territory.

1991

Russia begins evacuation of military personnel from Vozrozhdeniye Island.

1982

The Soviet authorities establish the Scientific Experimental and Production Base (SNOPB) in the city of Stepnogorsk, Kazakhstan, which is designed to test and certify pilot-scale and large-scale production methods for BW agents developed in the laboratories of Biopreparat and the Ministry of Defense, and to issue technical documentation and recommendations. Although formerly under the control of the civilian Main Administration of Microbiological Industry (Glavmikrobioprom), the SNOPB is a military-run BW organization reporting to the Biopreparat authorities.

1973

The All-Union Production Association "Biopreparat" is created by the Decree of the Central Committee of the

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Soviet Communist Party and the USSR Council of Ministers, and is tasked with implementing the programs approved by the Interagency Council.

1972

The USSR Council of Ministers establishes a secret Interagency Science and Technology Council on Molecular Biology and Genetics consisting of representatives from the MOD, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture. In the same year, the Soviet Union signs the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), and takes actions to stop all offensive BW activities.

1970s

NISKhl possibly begins research on anti-crop agents after it received orders from military authorities to study the resistance of crops to various biological pathogens.

Early 1970s

The Soviet authorities begin creating a new network of BW facilities parallel to its military system that were officially designed to conduct civilian research, though they also serve as a cover for military-related BW activities.

1958

The Soviet government establishes the Scientific Research Agricultural Institute (NISKhl) in the settlement of Gvardeyskiy outside the city of Otar, Kazakhstan, designed to work on microbial agents harmful to livestock and plants. Though formally under the control of the Soviet Ministry of Agriculture, the NISKhl is believed to be supervised by the Ministry of Defense.

1954

The Soviet government resumes BW testing on Vozrozhdeniye Island after building a biological weapons test site, officially referred to as "Aralsk-7." Vozrozhdeniye Island becomes the major proving ground in the Soviet Union for the open-air testing of BW agents developed at various Soviet facilities.

1949

Under the authority of the Main Directorate for Quarantine Infections of the USSR Ministry of Health, the Soviet government establishes the Anti-Plague Scientific Research Institute in the City of Almaty (former Alma-Ata), Kazakhstan, designed to develop defensive measure against BW agents.

1937

Due to security problems, all personnel are evacuated from Vozrozhdeniye Island and the site is closed.

1936

The Soviet Red Army's Scientific Medical Institute receives Vozrozhdeniye Island under its authority and establishes the Open-Air Test Site on the island. Vozrozhdeniye Island is located in the middle of the Aral Sea, which straddles a section of the border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The first experiments reportedly included the spread of tularemia and related microorganisms.

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Late 1920s

Soviet Union starts BW activities. Most elements of the early Soviet program are controlled by the Soviet military.

Sources: Gulbarshyn Bozheyeva, Yerlan Kunakbayev, and Dastan Yeleukenov, "Former Soviet Biological Weapons Facilities in Kazakhstan: Past, Present and Future," Occasional Paper, No. 1, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, June 1999; Jonathan B. Tucker and Raymond A. Zilinskas, "The 1971 Smallpox Epidemic in Aralsk, Kazakhstan, and the Soviet Biological Warfare Program," Occasional Paper No. 9, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, June 2002; Anthony Rimmington, "The Biopharmaceutical Industry in Kazakhstan: Opportunities for UK Companies," Report of the DTI OSTEMS 'Scout' Mission to Kazakhstan, University of Birmingham, July 1995; Jonathan B. Tucker's speech during the briefing on "Biological Decontamination of Vozrozhdeniye Island: The U.S.-Uzbek Agreement," Cooperative Threat Reduction Annual Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2008, December 31, 2006, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, www.dtra.mil.

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