



## Fighters Seize U.S.-Funded Biolab in Sudanese Capital, WHO Warns About Threat of ‘Germ Bomb’

### Description

A biolab containing contagious pathogens has been seized by fighters in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The lab, which includes isolates of polio, measles, and cholera, among other hazardous materials, has been taken over by unidentified fighters, prompting concerns of a potential outbreak.

Reports suggest that Sudanese fighters have taken over the laboratory, with conflicting reports as to which of the two factions, the army or the RSF, is occupying the building. However, a recent report from CNN suggests that the RSF, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, has seized control of the lab.

Since the lab contains numerous dangerous pathogens, the risk of a biological hazard is looming large. A high-ranking medical source told CNN “the danger lies in the outbreak of any armed confrontation in the laboratory because that will turn the laboratory into a germ bomb.”

“An urgent and rapid international intervention is required to restore electricity and secure the laboratory from any armed confrontation because we are facing a real biological danger,” the source added.

Nima Saeed Abid, the WHO’s representative in Sudan, told news outlets the situation was “extremely dangerous.” He warned that energy cuts may also have spoiled blood bags kept in the facility.

“That is extremely, extremely dangerous because we have polio isolates in the lab,” he told a UN briefing in Geneva by video call from Port Sudan. “We have measles isolates in the lab. We have cholera isolates in the lab. There is a huge biological risk associated with the occupation of the central public health lab in Khartoum by one of the fighting parties.”

The WHO has warned that the expulsion of technicians and power cuts in Khartoum have made it impossible to properly manage the biological materials stored in the lab for medical purposes. This situation has raised concerns about a potential public health crisis, given the danger posed by the

biological and chemical materials present in the laboratory.

The National Public Health Laboratory in Sudan is a recipient of support from a variety of U.S. government agencies, including: The Department of Defense (DOD), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) recently questioned USAID Administrator Samantha Power about its funding of biomedical research around the globe. In contention was USAID's funding of risky coronavirus research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the site of a suspected lab leak that led to the Covid-19 outbreak.

While there is no evidence that dangerous pathogens such as the novel coronavirus were housed at the National Public Health Laboratory in Sudan, the public health threat recalls U.S. officials sounding the alarms about biolabs in Ukraine potentially falling into the hands of invading Russian forces.

by Kyle Becker

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