

Russia Alleges Monkeypox Spread Began From 4 Biological Labs Operated By US In Nigeria

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Months after accusing the United States of having biological laboratories in Ukraine, Russia has now claimed that there are at least 4 US-operated biological laboratories in Nigeria from where the monkeypox virus was spread. As per the reports of *Sputnik*, Igor Kirillov, the chief of the Russian Radiation, Chemical and Biological Defence Troops, issued a new briefing on Friday, stating that the United States has 4 biological laboratories in Nigeria.

Kirillov noted that the WHO concluded that the current monkeypox virus originated in Nigeria, claiming that this is another state where the United States has placed its biological laboratories. He went on to state that according to the evidence available, the African nation holds at least four US-controlled Biolabs. Kirillov also cited media reports based on a 2021 Munich Security Conference-Nuclear Threat Initiative simulation modelling the spread of a bioengineered, highly lethal form of monkeypox, describing the exercise as "an odd coincidence" that requires further verification by specialists.

'WHO should investigate the activities of US-funded labs in Nigeria'

He stressed that in light of repeated US violations of biosafety requirements and evidence of careless storage of pathogenic biomaterials, the WHO should investigate the activities of US-funded labs in Nigeria, which are located in the cities of Abuja, Zaria and

Lagos, and report their findings to the international community. Kirillov also expressed concerns regarding the safety of smallpox virus samples within the US.

Kirillov further claimed that because of a lack of effective management and a violation of biosecurity standards in the United States, this disease might be exploited by terrorists. He continued by saying that between 2014 and 2021, the US Food and Drug Administration, the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Maryland, and the Center for Vaccine Research in Pennsylvania all uncovered unaccounted for vials containing the virus. He said that the activities of these labs breached the 1996 WHO resolution prohibiting the storage of smallpox's causal agent in all but one US-based laboratory, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

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300 confirmed or suspected cases of monkeypox

It is pertinent to mention here that there have been approximately 300 confirmed or suspected cases of monkeypox in around 20 countries where the virus had not previously circulated. The WHO is taking steps to combat the disease. However, it has advised the countries not to impose travel restrictions due to the outbreak.

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