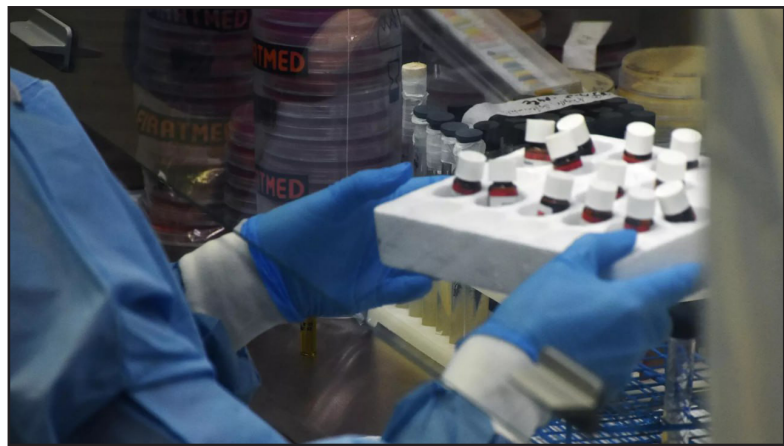


# U.S. Expanding Bioweapons Research in Africa, Says Russian Official



The Russian Defense Ministry has evidence suggesting that the United States has stepped up biological warfare research in Africa.

MOSCOW (RT) - Head of Russia's Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Protection Forces Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov has said that the U.S. is expanding its biological military presence across Africa.

According to Kirillov, the move comes after Russia halted the implementation of similar programs in former Ukrainian territories.

"Because Russia has managed to halt the implementation of biological warfare programs in Ukraine's liberated territories, the Pentagon is forced

to transfer incomplete research under Ukrainian projects to other regions," Kirillov alleged.

He highlighted Africa as a new zone of interest for the U.S. Defense Department and related agencies. The general mentioned the presence of Pentagon contractors in several African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Uganda, and South Africa.

"Washington uses outside actors to hide the objectives of research. These

are contracting and intermediary organizations (Metabiota, Quicksilver, EkoHealth Alliance, more than 20 companies) and businesses of the so-called Big Pharma," Kirillov claimed. Russia has documents confirming the rapid expansion of the U.S. biological warfare presence in Africa continent, he added.

Kirillov cited several examples of alleged U.S. activities, stating that "in October 2023, staff of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases conducted a large-scale survey of hantavirus samples from bats in Kenya's natural hotspots. A year ago, U.S. military biologists studied the effects of anti-malarial drugs on local populations.

"In January 2024, U.S. officials from the Defense Department, the State Department, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services met with the heads of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Africa to discuss the continent's prospects for developing laboratory capabilities," the general said.

At the end of last year, Kirillov said Russia had obtained documents proving that the U.S. had conducted research on bioweapon components and highly dangerous pathogens in Ukraine.

## Five Killed in North Las Vegas Shooting; Attacker Kills Self



North Las Vegas Police investigate the scene of Monday night's shooting at an apartment complex in North Las Vegas, Tuesday, June 25, 2024.

WASHINGTON (CBS) - A man who fatally shot five people and critically injured a 13-year-old girl at multiple apartments near Las Vegas has killed himself, authorities said.

The North Las Vegas Police Department said the suspected shooter, 47-year-old Eric Adams, killed himself Tuesday morning as he was confronted by officers in a neighborhood. Authorities had been searching for him since Monday night's shootings in separate apartment units.

Efforts by the Associated Press to locate relatives of Adams for comment weren't immediately successful.

Police said initially they found two women dead while investigating reports of a shooting late

Monday at an apartment in North Las Vegas. One of them was in her early 40s and the other in her late 50s, according to the department.

While officers were investigating, the department said, they learned a teen girl had been taken to a hospital with critical gunshot wounds and that there could be more victims in a nearby apartment. The teen was transported to UMC Trauma Center and remains in critical condition, police said.

Officers then found the bodies of two women in their mid-20s and a man in his early 20s. All five victims had been shot, police said. They weren't immediately identified and police did not provide details on whether the vic-

tims knew each other or knew the suspect.

The discovery led to an overnight search for Adams, who authorities had described as "armed and dangerous."

Just after 10 a.m. Tuesday, police learned that the suspect had been seen at a business in North Las Vegas.

As officers arrived in the area, they saw the suspect with a firearm running into the backyard of a nearby home. The department said officers followed him, but the suspect refused to drop his weapon and died by suicide.

Police haven't disclosed a motive for the shootings, which they described as an "isolated incident." A spokesperson for the police department didn't respond Tuesday to phone and emailed requests for more information.

On Tuesday, Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General, declared in an advisory that firearm violence is the primary cause of death among children and adolescents in the United States, labeling it as a public health crisis.

The Gun Violence Archive documented that so far in 2024, there have been 8,168 homicides along with 247 mass shootings.

According to Statista, California reported the largest number of homicides to the FBI in 2022, at 2,197 for the year. Texas recorded the second-highest number of murders, with 2,020 for the year.

## UK Conservatives Suffer Fall in Support After Betting Scandal

LONDON (Reuters) - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives suffered a further fall in support after five party officials, including two candidates, were being investigated over bets on the timing of an early election, according to a new poll.

The scandal is undermining the Conservatives' efforts to close the gap on the opposition Labour Party's large poll lead eight days before the national election.

The expanding number of Conservative officials under investigation has resulted in support for the party falling to 18%, down 2 percentage points, the poll Survation published

on Wednesday showed. The Labour Party was on 41%.

Since the betting allegations first emerged, the conduct of government has become the second most important issue for voters behind the cost of living crisis, the poll found.

The betting scandal unfolded further late on Tuesday after a cabinet minister said he had placed three bets on the date for the election, but that he was not being investigated by the gambling regulator. A Labour candidate also admitted placing a bet against himself.

Both the Conservatives and Labour on Tuesday withdrew support for candidates under investigation. Su-

nak had faced days of criticism for initially failing to withdraw suspend the regulator being investigated by the regulator.

While Sunak said he was "extremely angry" about the scandal, he previously stopped short of withdrawing support so the investigations could finish before any action was taken.

Mel Stride, the work and pensions minister, said on Wednesday that more candidates could be involved in the scandal and there should be a debate about political betting.

For the poll, Survation interviewed 1,022 adults in Britain by phone between June 21 and 25.

## Kenya President Backs Down on Tax Rises After Deadly Protests



Kenya's President William Ruto speaks at a press conference after police officers shot protesters demonstrating against Kenya's proposed finance bill 2024/2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, June 25, 2024.

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Kenya's president on Wednesday withdrew planned tax rises, bowing to pressure from protesters who had stormed parliament, launched demonstrations across the country and threatened more action this week.

William Ruto said he would not sign a finance bill including the hikes a day after violent clashes between police and protesters at the assembly and nationwide left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded, according to medics.

"Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this finance bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 finance bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn," he said in a televised address.

Ruto said he would now start a dialogue with Kenyan youth, without going into details, and work on austerity measures - starting with cuts to the budget of the presidency - to make up the difference in the country's finances.

On Tuesday, at least 13 people were killed in protests in Kenya after police opened fire on protesters demonstrating against proposals on tax hikes aimed at reducing government debt. The youth-led

rallies that started peacefully last week took a violent turn after crowds stormed and burned down parts of the country's parliament building.

The death toll from protests in Kenya has climbed to 13, an official from the main doctors' association told AFP Wednesday, after anti-tax hike rallies turned violent and police opened fire at demonstrators who ransacked parliament.

The unprecedented scenes that left parts of parliament ablaze and gutted and injured scores of people on Tuesday have shocked Kenyans and prompted President William Ruto's government to deploy the military.

The mainly youth-led rallies began mostly peacefully last week, with thousands of demonstrators marching in the capital Nairobi and across the country against the tax increases.

But tensions flared sharply on Tuesday afternoon, as police officers fired live rounds on crowds that later ransacked the parliament complex.

Hours later, Defense Minister Aden Bare Duale announced that the government had deployed the army to support the police in tackling "the security emergency" in the country.

## NATO Appoints Dutch PM Rutte as Next Secretary General



Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, speaks during a joint press conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia, Jan 23, 2024.

BRUSSELS - NATO tapped outgoing Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte Wednesday to become the bloc's next secretary-general who will replace Norway's Jens Stoltenberg from October 1. Stoltenberg led NATO for more than a decade during which his mandate was extended due to the war in Ukraine.

Rutte's appointment was sealed by NATO ambassadors during a meeting at the 32-nation alliance's headquarters in Brussels. U.S. President Joe Biden and his counterparts will formally welcome him to their table at a summit in Washington on July 9-11.

The outgoing Dutch premier will take over from the current secretary general, Norway's Jens Stoltenberg, on Oct. 1. Stoltenberg spent more than a decade at the helm. His mandate was repeatedly extended, in part to provide continuity after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

Secretaries general chair meetings and guide often delicate consultations

among member countries to ensure the organization, which operates on consensus, can function smoothly. The NATO leader also ensures decisions are put into action and speaks on behalf of all members.

Several obstacles had stood in Rutte's way of security the post, even though he had the backing of the White House and most other big member countries including Germany. He emerged as the sole candidate after Romanian President Klaus Iohannis withdrew last week.

Hungary lifted its objections earlier this month, once Rutte agreed that Budapest would not be obligated in the future to send personnel or provide funds for a new support plan for Ukraine. NATO's unanimous decision-making gives any member a veto over projects and operations.

Turkey had also voiced opposition to Rutte's bid but lifted its objections in April.

## News in Brief

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov and his U.S. counterpart Lloyd Austin have engaged in a phone conversation initiated by the U.S. side, the Russian Defense Ministry said on its Telegram channel on Wednesday.

During their conversation on Tuesday, the defense ministers exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine. Belousov expressed concerns about the ongoing escalation, particularly pointing out the dangers associated with the continuous supply of American weapons to Ukraine. In addition to the Ukraine crisis, the ministers also touched upon several other issues.

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SYDNEY (AFP) - The family and lawyer of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange held a press conference on Wednesday after his return to his home country of Australia following a plea deal with the U.S. government. Assange's lawyer Jennifer Robinson described his release as a "huge win for free speech". WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned to his homeland Australia aboard a charter jet on Wednesday, hours after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing U.S. military secrets in a deal with Justice Department prosecutors that concludes a drawn-out legal saga. Assange was accused of receiving and publishing hundreds of thousands of war logs and diplomatic cables that included details of U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea test-fired what appeared to be a hypersonic missile off its east coast on Wednesday, but it exploded in midair, South Korea's military said. The missile was launched from near the capital, Pyongyang, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Japan's Defense Ministry said the missile flew to an altitude of about 100 km (62 miles) and range of more than 200 km. South Korean and U.S. air forces said they conducted joint exercises involving F-22 and F-35 stealth fighter as part of their annual Buddy Squadron training.

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LONDON (Reuters) - Russian pranksters who often target people the Russian state is interested in released footage on Wednesday of a video call with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron after tricking him into thinking he was speaking to a former Ukrainian president. London's Foreign Office said earlier this month that Cameron had held a video call with someone purporting to be former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko before realizing he was the victim of a hoax. The call, which appears to have lasted around 15 minutes and in which Cameron is shown talking on his mobile phone dressed casually somewhere outside, was carried out by Russian pranksters who use the aliases "Vovan and Lexus." The duo is well-known inside Russia having duped a string of Western politicians over the years, including Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and, in 2022, then British defense minister Ben Wallace.

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THE HAGUE (AP) - The International Criminal Court on Wednesday convicted an al-Qaida-linked extremist leader of the religious persecution and torture of prisoners in Mali in 2012-13 in the historic desert city of Timbuktu. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud sat stoically while the decision finding him guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity was read out at the court in the Dutch city of The Hague. He faces up to life in prison when the sentence is decided at a later date. The three-judge panel found that rape and sexual slavery did occur while Al Hassan's group controlled Timbuktu.

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NIAMEY, Niger (AP) - An ambush by a "terrorist group" killed 21 Nigerian soldiers near the country's border with Burkina Faso, Niger's ruling military junta said in a statement read on national television. The statement Tuesday evening did not specify which group was behind the attack. Niger is struggling with a deadly security crisis involving several armed groups. Last week, the rebel Patriotic Liberation Front attacked a China-backed pipeline and threatened more attacks if the \$400 million deal with China isn't canceled. The group, led by Salah Mahmoud, a former rebel leader, took up arms after the junta staged a coup last year ousting a pro-Western government.