

US Sanctions Russian Research Institute that Developed COVID-19 Vaccine

The US Commerce Department blacklisted a Russian research institute that helped create the world's first Covid-19 vaccine.

By [Ben Norton](#)

Global Research, August 31, 2020

[The Grayzone](#) 28 August 2020

Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

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The US government has blacklisted several Russian scientific institutes, including the Russian Defense Ministry's 48th Central Research Institute, which has worked with other non-military medical centers to develop and test the world's first Covid-19 vaccine.

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State-led Covid-19 vaccine research in Russia, China, Cuba beat US 'public-private partnership'

The Russian government announced this August that it had registered the world's first Covid-19 vaccine, called Sputnik V.

Sputnik V was developed by the Russian Health Ministry's Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology. This scientific facility created the vaccine in a joint research project with the Russian Defense Ministry's [48th Central Research Institute](#).

On August 27, the US Commerce Department imposed sanctions on Russia's 48th Central Research Institute, blacklisting the scientific body.

While Russia took a state-led approach to create a coronavirus vaccine, the Trump administration announced a "[public-private partnership](#)" in May. The program, called "Operation Warp Speed," saw the US government dole out billions of tax dollars to Big Pharma companies.

The Trump administration awarded massive contracts to private corporations like [Novavax](#), [Pfizer](#), and [Moderna](#), while Trump reportedly offered “large sums of money” for exclusive rights to a vaccine being developed [by a German firm](#) so it could be sold for profit.

But the US public-private partnership was unable to develop a vaccine before foreign countries with government-led research efforts did. Besides Russia, a [state-owned Chinese company](#) says its vaccine will be ready by the end of 2020, while [Cuba is doing clinical trials](#) for a vaccine of its own.

US blacklists Russian research institutes

The US Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security announced a series of new sanctions measures on Russian research centers in the [US government’s federal register](#) on August 27.

Washington accused the blacklisted institutes of being associated with Russian chemical and biological weapons programs. The Kremlin denied this, calling the accusation “absolute nonsense.”

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The Russian research institutions sanctioned by the US government on August 27, 2020

A spokesperson for the Russian government called the decision “the [sanctions theater of the absurd](#).” A Kremlin press release blasted Washington for being unable to “live without sanctions and without declaring restrictions for anyone every day.”

“Given the scientific research of one of the institutes [which is engaged in developing Russia’s coronavirus vaccine] we cannot rule out that this is another example of uncovered and rampant non-competitive struggle,” said the Russian government spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov.

The US government's media arm, [Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty](#) (RFE/RL), accused these Russian research facilities of developing chemical and biological weapons.

At the same time, RFE/RL acknowledged, "Those targeted by the U.S. Commerce Department include one Russian Defense Ministry facility that is involved in [Russia's attempts to develop the world's first COVID-19 vaccine.](#)"

RFE/RL explained, "Formally, the move imposes new licensing restrictions on U.S. companies that seek to do business with the blacklisted companies in Russia or elsewhere."

U.S. authorities have blacklisted three Russian military and civilian scientific facilities, citing their alleged involvement in chemical and biological weapons research. <https://t.co/OdWrefBfas>

— Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (@RFERL) [August 27, 2020](#)

Russian state media noted that, in addition to being used to conduct [clinical trials for the Covid-19 vaccine](#), the Defense Ministry's newly blacklisted 48th Central Research Institute is "where vaccines against Ebola and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), as well as a universal flu vaccine, had been studied and successfully tested."

The US sanctions were imposed on the following Russian research institutions:

- 33rd Scientific Research and Testing Institute
- 48th Central Scientific Research Institute, Kirov
- 48th Central Scientific Research Institute, Sergiev Posad
- 48th Central Scientific Research Institute, Yekaterinburg
- State Scientific Research Institute of Organic Chemistry and Technology

As the US Commerce Department blacklisted these Russian research facilities, it imposed additional sanctions on two dozen Chinese institutions - mostly construction, technology, and communications companies - accusing them of "engaging in activities contrary to U.S. national security interests."

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