US alerted Israel, NATO to disease outbreak in China in November — TV report

White House was reportedly not interested in the intel, but it was passed onto NATO, IDF; when it reached Israel's Health Ministry, 'nothing was done'

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US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) attend a press conference in the East Room of the White House on January 28, 2020. (Alex Wong/Getty Images/AFP)

US intelligence agencies alerted Israel to the coronavirus outbreak in China already in November, Israeli television reported Thursday.

According to Channel 12 news, the US intelligence community became aware of the emerging disease in Wuhan in the second week of that month and drew up a classified document.

Information on the disease outbreak was not in the public domain at that stage — and was known only apparently to the Chinese government.

US intelligence informed the Trump administration, "which did not deem it of interest," but the report said the Americans also decided to update two allies with the classified document: NATO and Israel, specifically the IDF.

Medical staff wear protective clothing to help stop the spread of a deadly virus which began in the city, work at the Wuhan Red Cross Hospital in Wuhan on January 25, 2020. (Hector Retamal/)

The network said Israeli military officials later in November discussed the possibility of the spread of the virus to the region and how it would affect Israel and neighboring countries.

The intelligence also reached Israel's decision makers and the Health Ministry, where "nothing was done," according to the report.

Last week, ABC News reported that US intelligence officials were warning about the coronavirus in a report prepared in November by the American military's National Center for Medical Intelligence.

It was unclear if that was the same report that was said to have been shared with

Israel.

Colonel Shane Day, the NCMI director, denied last week that any such report existed. "As a matter of practice the National Center for Medical Intelligence does not comment publicly on specific intelligence matters," he said. "However, in the interest of transparency during this current public health crisis, we can confirm that media reporting about the existence/release of a National Center for Medical Intelligence Coronavirus-related product/assessment in November of 2019 is not correct. No such NCMI product exists."

In its first major step to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, Israel announced on January 30 it was barring all flights from China, ten days after Chinese leader Xi Jinping issued his first public comments on the virus and the Asian country's top epidemiologist said for the first time it could be spread from person to person.

In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping visits the Chuanshan port area of the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in east China's Zhejiang Province, Sunday, March 29, 2020. (Ju Peng/Xinhua via AP)

An Associated Press report on Wednesday said Xi's warning came seven days after Chinese officials secretly determined that they were likely facing a pandemic, potentially costing China and other countries valuable time to prepare for the outbreak.

Doctors in Wuhan, the city at the center of the outbreak in China, are reported to have first tried to have warn about the virus in December, but were censored.

The Chinese government has repeatedly denied suppressing information in the early days, saying it immediately reported the outbreak to the World Health Organization.

Agencies contributed to this report.