



CIA fake vaccination campaign in Pakistan

During the manhunt for Osama bin Laden, the CIA ran a covert operation utilizing a fake hepatitis vaccine program in Pakistan to illicitly collect blood samples to confirm the presence of bin Laden or his family.^[1] The CIA did not administer hepatitis vaccines, and instead planned to compare DNA samples collected from the program with the DNA of bin Laden's sister, who died in Boston in 2010.^[1]

The program was ultimately unsuccessful. It led to the arrest of a participating physician, Shakil Afridi, and was widely ridiculed as undermining public health.^{[2][3]} The program is credited with increasing vaccine hesitancy in Pakistan^{[4][5][6][7]} and a rise in violence against healthcare workers for being perceived as spies.^[8] The rise in vaccine hesitancy following the program led to the re-emergence of polio in Pakistan, with Pakistan having by far the largest number of polio cases in the world by 2014.^[8]

Aftermath

In September of 2012, after working for 30 years in Pakistan, Save the Children was expelled.^[9]

In 2011, the program was condemned by Doctors without Borders.^[9] In Feb 2012, the program was condemned by the Non-governmental organization InterAction.^[9] On January 6, 2013, the deans of twelve American schools of public health sent a letter to Obama condemning the program.^{[10][9]}

On May 16, 2014, Lisa Monaco responded that vaccine programs would be excluded from espionage:^{[11][12]}

I wanted to inform you that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) directed in August 2013 that the agency make no operational use of vaccination programs, which includes vaccination workers. Similarly, the Agency will not seek to obtain or exploit DNA or other genetic material acquired through such programs. This CIA policy applies worldwide and to U.S. and non-U.S. persons alike.

See also

- CIA activities in Pakistan
- CIA transnational health and economic activities

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