**Resource sheet 6.1A**

**Abridged extract from Milton Leitenberg, ‘China’s false allegations of the use of biological weapons by the United States during the Korean War’, published on the Wilson Center website as Cold War International History Project Working Paper 78 (March 2016)**

**Timeline of allegations against the USA that it was using biological warfare**

*The accusations began in 1949. Soviet propaganda claimed that the US was testing biological weapons (plague) against the native Inuit peoples of Alaska. Chinese propaganda amplified these claims, claiming that the US was working with General Shiro Ishii, who had led the Japanese biological warfare efforts in the Second World War.*

*The actual allegations of BIOLOGICAL WARFARE use during the Korean War began on May 8, 1951. North Korea’s Foreign Minister, Pak Heon-yeong (Pak Hon-yong), claimed that the United States had used biological weapons between December 1950 and January 1951, and was spreading smallpox in North Korea. The Chinese government also claimed that the US used chemical weapons in the Korean War on ten occasions between March 5 and May 13, 1951.*

*In February 1952 these claims were stepped up. The North Korean Foreign Minister issued an official statement to the United Nations Secretariat, claiming that in January and February the US had made multiple air drops over North Korea, littering the earth with insects infected with the microorganisms that caused plague, cholera, and other diseases. China also claimed that US aircraft spread BIOLOGICAL WARFARE over ‘70 cities and counties of North Korea… on 804 occasions’.*

**Communist investigations of the allegations**

*Soviet representatives in the United Nations took up the charges of biological warfare use on behalf of the Chinese and North Koreans. In addition to raising the issue at international forums, between mid-March and mid-April 1952, one-quarter of Soviet media coverage was devoted to the BIOLOGICAL WARFARE allegations against the US. Mass public demonstrations of protest were held all over the USSR and its Eastern European satellites, as well as in virtually all Western European capitals. In total, millions of people marched in condemnation of the alleged US use of BIOLOGICAL WARFARE.*

*The Chinese and North Koreans rejected repeated offers of on-site investigations by the World Health Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Instead, the two governments hosted their own ‘investigations’. The first was carried out by a team sent by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a group which was loyal to the USSR. It visited North Korea from March 5–19, 1952 and confirmed all the allegations as true. The Chinese government also established its own investigating body, the International Scientific Commission (ISC) for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China.*

*The ISC was present in China and North Korea between June 25 and August 31, 1952, and their massive 669-page report was published in Beijing in 1952. The ISC report documents fewer incidents and fewer types of incidents than were reported by the lawyers’ group, which in turn were fewer than reported by Chinese media sources. The most significant aspect of both the jurists’ and ISC ‘investigations’ is that neither group did any field investigating of their own. They were presented with ‘evidence’ by the Chinese and North Koreans, which they accepted, on faith, as fact.*

**Rejecting the allegations**

*The charges were immediately and repeatedly denied by US delegates at the UN. The ISC report was also strongly criticized by individual [scientists] in the UK, US, and Australia. The main criticism was that the insects in the allegations would not have been able to carry the alleged diseases.*

*In subsequent years, other criticisms and admissions were even more telling. Tibor Meray, a Hungarian journalist who had spent the Korean War inside North Korea, reported that North Korean peasants told doctors at a Hungarian field hospital that paper packets of insects had been placed in the snow by Chinese soldiers. Meray also reported that during discussions in Beijing between Chinese officials and those of Poland and Yugoslavia in 1956, the Chinese participants stated they believed the accusations about germ warfare to have been without foundation. In the 1990s, one of the Chinese cease-fire negotiators in 1953 told an historian in reference to the BIOLOGICAL WARFARE allegations, that ‘it was all bulls\*\*t’.*