

Disruptions in the supply of Chinese vaccine to Ukraine are not accidental?

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On February 24, vaccination of the population began in Ukraine. Kiev received the first batch of 500,000 doses of Oxford / AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine.

In total, the Ukrainian leadership has entered into agreements for the supply of about 20 million doses of vaccines from four suppliers. 117 thousand doses of the vaccine should be supplied by Pfizer, at least 2.2 million doses – by AstraZeneca. In addition, supplies of the Novavax drug are to begin this summer. Its volume should be 15 million doses. Another 1.93 million doses were promised by the Chinese company Sinovac Biotech.

The first American vaccine from Pfizer was supposed to arrive in Ukraine. However, the delivery time was disrupted. Supplier representatives said this was due to a shortage of the company's production capacity.

This fact did not cause any panic in the Ministry of Health of Ukraine. The officials reacted with understanding to the situation. They expressed confidence that the promised volumes of the drug will be delivered later.

The country's health minister, Maxim Stepanov, said in this regard that "Pfizer disrupts supplies, AstraZeneca disrupts supplies. They are all delaying their deliveries. Because there is not enough capacity, there has never been such an unprecedented vaccination in the world".

Two days ago, it became known that the Chinese company Lekhim is also delaying the delivery of the first batch of the

Sinovac Biotech coronavirus vaccine. In an interview with Reuters, Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine Igor Ivaschenko announced the intention of the country's leadership to fine the Chinese company. He stated that "they are not meeting the stated deadlines. There will be penalties that are specified in the contract". The agreement provides for the possibility of imposing penalties for missed deadlines in the amount of 0.1% of the contract value for each day of delay. The amount of the fine the Ukrainian side will choose has not yet been reported by officials.

The contract for the supply of the Chinese vaccine was concluded at the end of December 2020. The transaction volume amounted to UAH 964 million and provides for the supply of 1.93 million doses of Sinovac Biotech vaccine. The Lekhim company must deliver the first batch of 700 thousand doses no later than 30 days after the vaccine is registered in one of the countries indicated in the list. In addition, at least 3 working days before the delivery date, the supplier was obliged to provide the customer with a certificate of product registration in Ukraine.

According to the available information, the problem arose with the certification of the vaccine in Ukraine. Lekhim sent a letter to the Ukrainian leadership on February 3 with a request to postpone the start of deliveries to April. Also, representatives of the pharmaceutical company demanded to remove the lower limit of the vaccine effectiveness at 70%.

However, it is believed that the timing of deliveries of the Chinese vaccine was disrupted not only because of problems with obtaining an export license from the Chinese government and the late adoption by the Ukrainian parliament of a special law on the registration of vaccines.

A dispute arose between Kiev and Beijing over the decision of the Ukrainian leadership to nationalize the assets of the Motor Sich aircraft building plant. China took this step as

unfriendly and announced the imposition of sanctions against Ukraine.

Therefore, some experts suggest that supply disruptions are a variant of the asymmetric response from the Chinese side. A lack of vaccine could jeopardize the national vaccination program. And perhaps it will induce the Ukrainian leadership to be more accommodating and resolve the issue in a light favorable to China.

It is worth noting that the interruptions in the supply of the American vaccine were met with understanding by Ukrainian officials. The Chinese supplier is going to impose sanctions.

And this only confirms the stated assumption.

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