DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

WORLDWIDE

(U) Alternative Analysis: The Next 12 Months of COVID-19

(b)(1); Sec. 1.4(e)

20 March 2020

(S//NF) DIA's authoritative assessment is that the COVID-19 outbreak

The WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on 11 March, when it included more than 118,000 cases and 4,000 deaths in 114 countries. We also considered plausible yet unpredictable events that could alter the COVID-19 landscape.

(U) ***Methodology: Alternate Futures and Wild Card***

(U) *We used the alternate futures structured analytic technique to examine potential outcomes by systematically exploring multiple ways a situation can develop when there is high complexity and uncertainty. We considered potential outcomes for a persistence of COVID-19 during the next year, including indicators and implications. We did not consider total global cessation of COVID-19 because of the lack of indicators to distinguish this potential future from its transmission being suppressed to undetected levels. This analysis also examines wild cards—plausible but unpredictable game-changing events—that could affect outcomes. Our alternative analysis assumes that at least two-thirds of countries will transparently report disease data in accordance with International Health Regulation guidelines to allow for monitoring of the outbreak's trajectory and the international response. If this assumption were proven false, the outbreak and pandemic could follow an incorrectly identified pattern without global awareness, restricting our ability to assess the future of the pandemic and its implications accurately. Alternative analysis products are intended to be thought provoking, not authoritative.*

(U) **Drivers for an Outbreak or Pandemic**

(U) **WORLDWIDE:** Alternative Analysis: The Next 12 Months of COVID-19

(U) Global COVID-19 activity in 12 months could remain at transmission levels similar to today. This could occur because of new COVID-19 outbreaks in previously unaffected areas, continuation of outbreaks in affected areas, or a resurgence of COVID-19 transmission. Drivers that will shape this longer-term trajectory are government public health responses and individual behaviors and the human immune response. The following drivers of a reemergence of COVID-19 are listed in no particular order.

- (U) **Response and Behavior.** Government-mandated public health and individual measures such as case detection and isolation, quarantine, school and workplace closures, restrictions on gatherings, and personal hygiene are expected to reduce peak and total COVID-19 transmission ("flattening the curve"), while premature termination of preventative and mitigation measures could enable outbreaks or pandemics to return, according to an academic article.
- (U) **Immunity.** The human immune response to other endemic coronaviruses does not provide long-term protection against future reinfection, according to scientific studies. Short-term immunity to COVID-19 would make populations that experienced outbreaks through the first half of 2020 vulnerable to COVID-19 outbreaks in late 2020 or early 2021.

(U) **Wild Cards Altering COVID-19 Trajectory**

(U) The following are plausible and unpredictable wild card events that could have a game-changing effect and alter the local or global trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic during the next year. The following events are listed in no particular order.

- (U) **Superspreading Events.** A single COVID-19 case could spark a massive outbreak, enabling the disease to spread quickly. For example, in South Korea, 37 infections in a religious community were linked to one individual, according to a press report. Immediate health consequences could be high if this occurs in a health care setting or at mass gatherings with people who will return to many geographically dispersed locations.
- (U) **Medical Countermeasures.** As of 13 March, vaccines to prevent COVID-19 are unavailable and not expected to be fielded for at least a year, according to a U.S. Government expert quoted in a scientific journal. Clinical trials are underway for COVID-19 treatments, which could prove effective in reducing the clinical severity of infection and might be available before the pandemic ends, judging from a press report.
- [redacted] **Misinformation or Disinformation.** False information related to COVID-19 is ubiquitous on the Internet, according to press reporting. Whether unintentional or deliberate, we deem that this [redacted]

(b)(3):10 USC 424

(b)(1); Sec.

(U) **WORLDWIDE:** Alternative Analysis: The Next 12 Months of COVID-19

(b)(3):10 USC 424

(U) Alternate Futures of COVID-19 Trajectory Through June 2021

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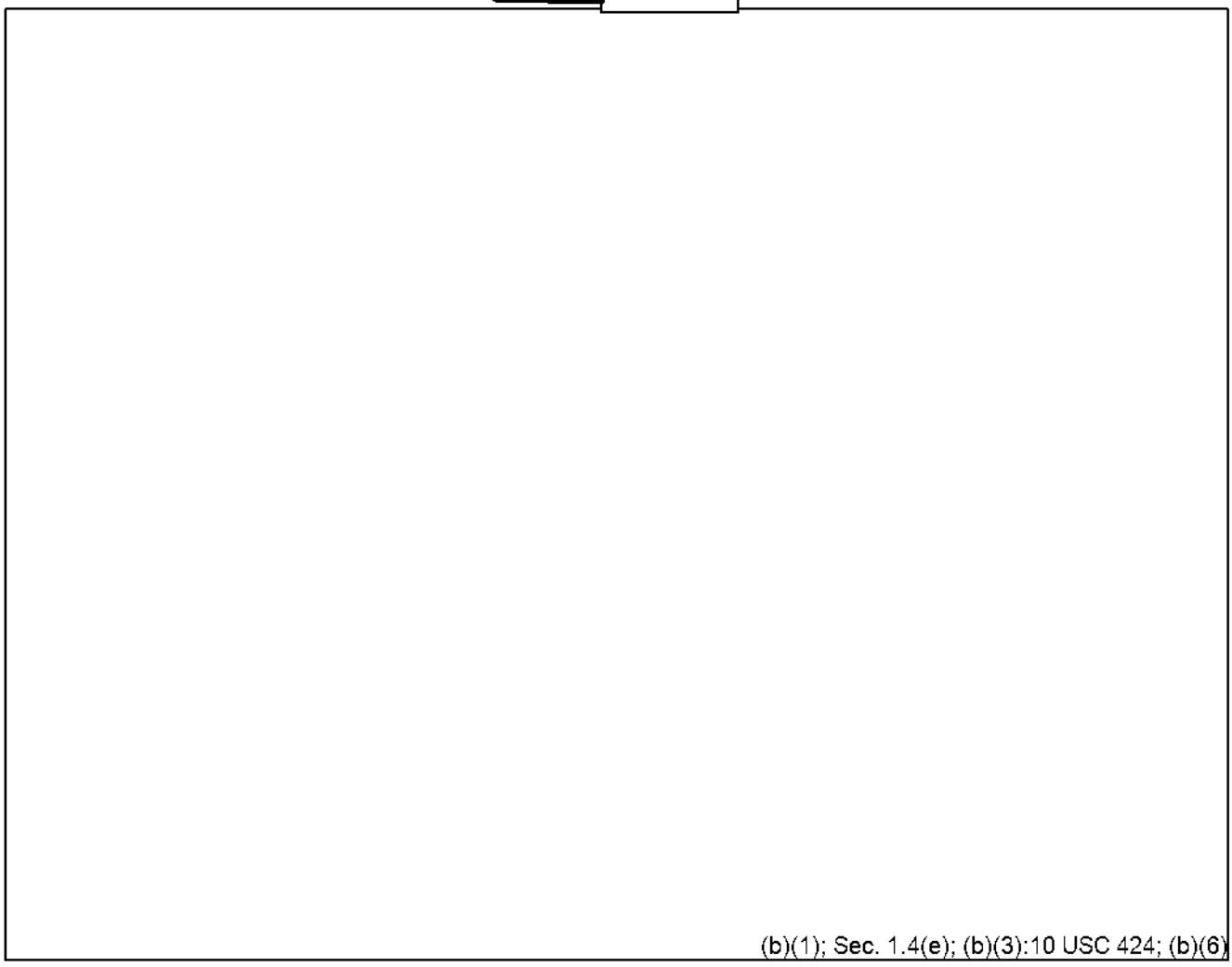

(b)(1); Sec. 1.4(e); (b)(3):10 USC 424; (b)(6)

National Center for Medical Intelligence

(b)(3):10 USC 424; (b)(6)

(U) **WORLDWIDE:** Alternative Analysis: The Next 12 Months of COVID-19

(b)(3):10 USC 424

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(b)(1); Sec. 1.4(e)