

**Statement by Barbara Hatch Rosenberg, Federation of American Scientists
Before the Delegates to the Fifth Review Conference of the
Biological Weapons Convention**

Geneva, 21 November 2001

Mr. Chairman and Delegates,

I'm a New Yorker. My city has just been attacked, first by foreign terrorists, then by an American using a weaponized biological agent – anthrax, that was derived, almost certainly, from a US defense laboratory. The public fear that resulted is a good reason for wanting to PREVENT any further biological attacks – not just to detect them, or diagnose, or treat, or investigate, or otherwise respond to attacks, but to PREVENT them.

The anthrax attacks demonstrated the incredible potency of weaponized disease, trailing through the postal system in the wake of only a handful of letters. But this was only a small taste of what is possible.

Considering the larger-scale threat, Douglas MacEachin, former Deputy Director of the CIA and current CIA consultant, testified last week in Congress that:

The principal concern today, the thing (he said) that I would be most worried about if I were back at the CIA, would be a covert state program using a terrorist mechanism to deliver it. The state could get the terrorist group to make the delivery and then deny any connection with it... That, I believe, is the threat—the next one that is going to hit us.

The United States has come here with commendable proposals for national legislation and regulations, and other voluntary mechanisms. Like the BWC itself, these are based on mutual consent. They will surely help to prevent domestic bioterrorism, but they do not address the most probable serious threat.

If Secretary Bolton and other American officials believe that Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya, and others have BW programs, then it should be obvious to those officials that voluntary measures won't work at the international level, and that a legally-binding mechanism is the only possible way to influence the behavior of countries of concern. Only an international legal agreement can increase the available information about biological activities around the world, or bring the international community together to respond, if a violation of the Convention should be suspected.

The Bush administration has argued that inspection of innocent parties is a burden without gain. Rather, it is the price that has to be paid for international cooperation and greater confidence in compliance with the Convention.

If it is not obvious to the US government that a multilateral treaty is essential for addressing the BW threat, it IS obvious to the rest of the world. Or is there some reason why the American logic is superior? No, according to the former CIA official who testified last week. He sees US rejection of the Protocol as a step further down the unilateral path, and he asks his government to consider the cost of going it alone—what its impact will be on the kind of political cooperation that we are going to need,

to deal with the terrorist problem. The US cost-benefit analysis is skewed, he suggests.

Perhaps the best way to protect my city and prevent a more serious BW attack against civilians is not through secret, ultra-sophisticated threat assessment projects, involving biological bombs and weaponized agents and large aerosol facilities. Perhaps secret threat assessment activities are not the best example to set for other countries. Perhaps transparency would be a better policy, and monitoring compliance would be more valuable than secrecy, after all.

I must add, parenthetically, that transparency with respect to activities does not necessitate divulging the results of experiments, which may, of course, need to be kept confidential for security reasons.

Review conferences are not the place for negotiating new measures to strengthen the Convention. But, whatever else may happen here, this review conference will be a failure unless the States Parties agree to continue talking as long and as often as may be necessary in order to pursue every possible means for PREVENTING bioterrorist attacks anywhere. For the citizens of New York and of the rest of the world, I thank you.

I would also like to thank the Chairman and the Delegates of the States Parties for giving Non-Governmental Organizations this opportunity to present their views.