2019 Munich Security Conference Tabletop Exercise on Responding to Deliberate Biological Events
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, MX4
August 2019
Project Origin: Ebola Response & the BWC

- **2014 BWC States Parties** recommendations to assess Ebola response for lessons relevant to Article VII of the Convention

- **USG research project** findings: Core mandate of NGOs and IOs would not change in scenario, but major challenges to response

- **2016 and 2017 Wilton Park Meetings**: US, UK, Canada, Georgetown

- **2017 MSP**: [BWC/MSP/2017/WP.20](https://example.com) - Responding to deliberate biological release: the requirements for effective, coordinated international action - Submitted by Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America
Advancing Biosecurity at the Munich Security Conference

2017: Bill Gates alerts national security leaders to dangers associated with advances in biotechnology

2018: MSC side event on biological risks associated with advances in technology

2019: Tabletop exercise to identify steps to improve international response for deliberate biological attacks
2019 Munich Security Conference TTX: Convening Health and Security Leaders to Enhance International Response to Deliberate Biological Events

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United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Sir Jeremy Farrar
Wellcome Trust

Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland
Former Prime Minister of Norway
Former WHO Director General

Dr. Chris Elias
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Mr. Stephen Cornish
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2019 TTX: Goal and Key Questions

Develop concrete recommendations for global coordination and response to a high-consequence, deliberate biological release – such as a genetically engineered agent.

• Who is in charge of overarching coordination?

• How should information be shared and coordinated across public health, humanitarian operation, and attribution investigation?

• How should an attribution investigation for a deliberate biological event be conducted during an active public health and humanitarian response?
“Vestia”: A Fictional Country

- A weak state battling a terrorist insurgency.
- A multinational military coalition supports the central government.
- The health system has been severely weakened by violence.
- International donors are providing humanitarian and health support.
- The terrorist group is losing ground.
Tabletop Exercise Videos
Ending Scenario Snapshot

- Confirmation of genetic engineering.

- No effective vaccines or therapeutics.

- Terrorist group claims responsibility.

- Reporting of terrorist group link to a state that may have assisted with the attack.

- UN Security Council emergency session on alleged use of biological weapons.
Key Findings

- No overarching coordinating mechanism for high-consequence and deliberate biological events.
- There is a “duty to share” information, but real challenges exist in sharing between security, health, and humanitarian actors.
- Investigation and attribution to find the perpetrator(s) and deter follow-on attacks is important but will be ad hoc, relying on strong UN Secretary-General leadership.
- There are major gaps in global financing for preparedness and response for a deliberate biological event.
Organizers’ Recommendations - Summary

**International Coordination**
- The Office of the UNSG should designate a permanent facilitator and/or unit devoted to coordinating the response to deliberate, high-consequence biological events.

**Information Sharing**
- The UNSG and the WHO Director General should co-convene a meeting to propose specific mechanisms to enable the rapid exchange of genetic information.

**Investigation & Attribution**
- The UNSG should ensure a formal, clear, and regularly exercised process for investigation and attribution of alleged use of biological weapons.

**Financing for National Preparedness**
- UN Member States should rapidly increase financing for national pandemic preparedness.
Organizers’ Recommendations

The Office of the UNSG should designate a permanent facilitator and/or unit devoted to coordinating the response to deliberate, high-consequence biological events.

An expert panel should:

- Present recommendations to fill existing gaps in the international response architecture for deliberate biological events by September 2020.
- Initiate a mapping exercise to assess which parts of the UN system would be involved in response to a deliberate biological event, which laboratories could contribute, which existing international instruments are relevant, and which new authorities and structures may be required.
- Update or develop UN system guidance to outline how each involved organization will work with others to share information, including during events involving security organizations and disparate data streams.
Organizers’ Recommendations

- The UNSG and the WHO Director General should co-convene a meeting to propose specific mechanisms to enable the rapid exchange of genetic information.

- Information sharing during a deliberate biological event, should be prioritized first and foremost as part of an response to save lives. It is also vital to investigate and attribute an attack to prevent further use.

- The UNSG and the WHO Director General should collaborate now to create conditions that will enable rapid sharing of genetic data and samples.

- In advance of a deliberate biological event, the UNSG, the WHO, INTERPOL, and UNOCHA should clarify the mechanism(s) for information sharing between security organizations and with UN Member States, including through functional exercises.
Organizers’ Recommendations

- The UNSG should ensure a formal, clear, and regularly exercised process for investigation and attribution of alleged use of biological weapons.

  • The UNSG should provide UNODA with resources and authorities necessary for UNSGM fact-finding missions. This should include an attribution investigation mandate, whether the alleged use was the result of a terrorist or a state-sponsored attack.
  
  • UNODA should develop clear protocols for operations, including coordination with public health and humanitarian operations.
  
  • The UNSGM should be regularly exercised for biological scenarios, with access to a roster of trained and globally diverse experts.
  
  • The UNSG, in coordination with UNODA, WHO, and INTERPOL, should designate a trusted laboratory network responsible for receiving evidence and for determining chain of custody. This laboratory network should be regularly exercised.
  
  • Countries should establish guidance for linking security organizations to public health and veterinary agencies.
Organizers’ Recommendations

- **UN Member States should rapidly increase financing for national pandemic preparedness.**

  - UN Member States should prioritize financing for the WHO Health Emergencies Program, the UNSGM, humanitarian operators, and other programs required for effective response.
  - All UN Member States should undergo external evaluations and publish and finance gaps identified by the WHO JEE and the OIE Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway assessment.
  - G-7 and G-20 should prioritize assistance to fill global preparedness gaps in 2019 and 2020.
  - Costs to implement the National Action Plans for Health Security should be estimated and financed for each country that has undergone a JEE. These should include financing for biosecurity and other security-sector related targets.
Dissemination of Findings

Report
- June 14: findings and recommendations released

Briefings
- World Heath Assembly (May 2019)
- London experts meeting (May 2019)
- Global Health Security Conference (June 2019)
- BWC Meeting of Experts (August 2019)

What’s Next?
- December 2019: New TTX on deliberate BW
- MSC 2020: New senior leaders’ TTX
- Use videos for educational purposes
“Today, I am sure we will hear strong words, like ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘existential.’ It’s true, they are not out of place.”

--Mr. Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Co-Chair, Global Preparedness Monitoring Board
Thank you!

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TABLETOP EXERCISE FOR SENIOR GLOBAL LEADERS ON INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO DELIBERATE BIOLOGICAL EVENTS

Feb. 14, 2019
Munich, Germany

https://www.nti.org/about/biosecurity/
https://ghss.georgetown.edu/dbe_response/ttx
Thank you!