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Dedicated to Global
First Responders

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PART A

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Happy
New
Year



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C²CBRNE
DIARY



Topics that attracted attention!

EDITOR'S CORNER




Editorial

Brig Gen (ret.) Ioannis Galatas, MD, MSc, MC (Army)

Editor-in-Chief
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Dear Colleagues,

The New Year 2023 is around the corner but the overall situation on our planet remains alarmingly chaotic!

Pandemics: It seems that the coronavirus pandemic is over. Nobody wears a mask in supermarkets, in stadiums during World Cup, in night clubs or schools. In contrast, they all speak about a "*tripledemic*" (coronavirus, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus), but no measures are taken. I propose keeping the mask in crowded places no matter what. Better safe (as much as possible) than sorry!

European war 1: Biden administration sent an additional \$275 million in air defense and military aid to Ukraine. The latest package came a month after the Biden administration announced a \$400 million package to Ukraine. The U.S. has committed nearly \$20 billion in weapons to Ukraine since Russia invaded the country in February. In addition, the European Council approved 18-billion-euro aid for 2023 but Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently (Dec 13) announced the cost of how much Ukraine needs to get through the winter, citing a figure of around 800 million euros (\$840+ million)! (Update: additional 1.85 billion USD following Zelensky's visit to the US [Dec 21]).

European war 2: "Russia must be defeated in Ukraine" are the words repeated by various Western politicians in different ways for many months and many are rightly wondering, why are they so afraid of a Russian victory? What does such a victory threaten the West and how will it affect the personal fate of Western leaders and the entire Western civilization? After all, it is supposed to be a Christian West that has turned against a Christian Russia. We are not in the Cold War period when the conflict was between the Christian West and the godless communist Soviet Union. Or is it now that the collective West is "atheist" and the roles have reversed? (Theofrastos [Andreopoulos](#) | [pronews.gr](#))

Future elections: A recent poll found that 71 percent of US Democrats surveyed believed Biden could win in 2024, up from 60 percent who said the same in August, though they were evenly divided on whether he should be the 2024 nominee. Rapper Kanye West (now Ye) has said he intends to run for US president in 2024, despite facing several scandals over his recent behavior (e.g., "*Every human being has value to bring to the table, especially Hitler.*") . He also claimed to have asked Donald Trump to be his running mate. 335 million (2023) Americans cannot elect a decent President? Perhaps the only solution (for many countries) would be to forbid former and active politicians and their first and second-degree relatives to be involved in politics and governance.

European corruption: WMC is a new abbreviation for what is happening lately in the EU – it means weapons of mass corruption used by many countries and for many reasons ... WMCs on the other side of the ocean as well as Elon Musk reveals about the 2020 Presidential election – no black money just votes and misinformation. What a wonderful world we live in! A rather cold world now that the EU does not like Qatar and its gas ...

FIFA World Cup: The qualification of the Moroccans at the expense of Portugal apart from celebrations were followed by clashes in The Netherlands, France, Italy, and England where hordes of foreigners smashing everything they could find confronted local police forces. Incidents reveal that multiculturalism failed and both legal and illegal immigrants have not integrated into host countries. The same behavior repeated after losing the game with France for the semifinals in Montpellier, Nice, and Brussels. On the other hand, many European mass media shed oil on





fire with inappropriate uncivilized [comments](#) comparing Moroccan players and their mothers with monkeys on live television (TV2 News, Denmark) or comparing the Moroccan national team with the Islamic State militant group (Welt, Germany).

SE Mediterranean: The very serious matter is Tayyip Erdogan who directly and shamelessly threatens to hit Athens with missiles. It is the president of Turkey who cultivates a war climate by preparing the citizens of the neighboring country that conflict with Greece is on the horizon. Who demands the demilitarization of the Greek islands, who demands that Athens stop planning the purchase of weapons systems for the defense of Greek citizens, who wants control of half of the Aegean and the entire Mediterranean, who cannot digest that Greece also has rights in the sea zones between Crete, Rhodes, Kastelorizo. Erdogan is not isolated. We have not seen any kind of clear condemnation of the Turkish rhetorical provocations to date. And that is why the president of Turkey is applying the tactics of North Korea's Kim Jong Un and bludgeoning Greece with missile tests, directly threatening to bomb the Greek capital. In addition, the powerful, USA, China, Germany, and Britain, instead of stopping Erdogan's threats of war tolerate him and nurture his assertive policy at the expense of Greece. Washington's response "find a solution, have a dialogue, be allies in NATO" does not stop Ankara, but rather discourages it. One threatens one claims the other's territories and maritime zones with public statements, and one is the one who has cut off political and diplomatic contacts as if Greece and Turkey are at war. I hope we all realize that the crisis with Turkey can break out at any moment if Erdogan decides to. Keep also an open eye on provocative Albania, a country wishing to enter the EU ...

Human stupidity: Status remains unchanged – zenith!

The Editorial Team of the “C²BRNE Diary” is wishing all of you, your families, and your beloved ones a very fruitful New Year full of Health, Joy, and Success at all levels of personal and professional life! Stay vigilant because the unexpected does not respect holidays, vacation times, or logic!

The Editor-in-Chief





Laser strikes York police helicopter, Vaughan teen charged

Source (+video): <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/laser-strikes-york-police-helicopter-vaughan-teen-charged-1.3195012>



York police quickly located a suspect after a laser beam hit the force's helicopter early Sunday morning. (York Regional Police/YouTube)

August 2015 – A 19-year-old man is facing a handful of charges after a York Regional Police helicopter was hit with a laser beam while responding to a weapon call over the weekend.

The force's Air2 helicopter was flying over the area of Highway 7 and Pine Valley Drive at 1:30 a.m. Sunday in Vaughan. The chopper was assisting officers on the ground who were searching for a suspect on a weapons call.

The helicopter was hit several times by a bright light from the area near Jenna Court.

"These guys are continuously hitting us here," the officer on board the aircraft says in a video of the incident posted to YouTube, adding that he will have to leave the area.

The flight officer used the on-board camera to spot three men standing by a car at the end of Jenna Court

In the video, several bright green flashes appear in the sky before it cuts to an overhead shot of the three suspects. One suspect starts running, jumps over a fence, drops an object he is holding and keeps running.

"We're going to stay with the target," the on-board officer says. "We know where the laser is."

The officer on board then guides officers on the ground to the object, which was later determined to be a pellet gun with a laser scope mounted on top.

Officers with the canine unit tracked the first suspect through a wooded area with the help of the chopper. He was arrested while trying to hide underneath some trees.

The video ends with an overhead shot of a group of officers surrounding a suspect, who appears to have his hands in cuffs behind his back.

Nicholas Caranci, 19, of Vaughan, is charged with mischief endangering life. He is also facing a charge of unlawfully engaging in behaviour that endangers an aircraft under the Aeronautics Act and projecting a bright light source into navigable airspace under the Canadian Aviation Regulation.

Caranci is a reservist with the Canadian Armed Forces. A military spokesperson says he is a private with the 32 Service Battalion but is not considered an active member.

Caranci is scheduled to appear in court in Newmarket on Sept. 18.



Pilots blinded by lasers

The Vaughan incident is the latest in a series of laser strikes to hit pilots and police in recent years. One year ago, a Richmond Hill teen was also charged after the York police chopper was struck by a laser beam.

Police warn that pointing lasers at aircraft can cause "flash blindness" for a pilot, where the image of the flash remains in the eye for several seconds.

"For a pilot in control of an aircraft flying over populated areas, the consequences can be serious," the force warns in a news release. "Those who aim these pointers at aircraft are putting lives in danger, not only in the aircraft, but on the ground. This is a serious potential for harm to the pilot and the prospect of a crash."

EU external borders in October: Number of irregular entries on the rise

Source: <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-in-october-number-of-irregular-entries-on-the-rise-7CiZBL>

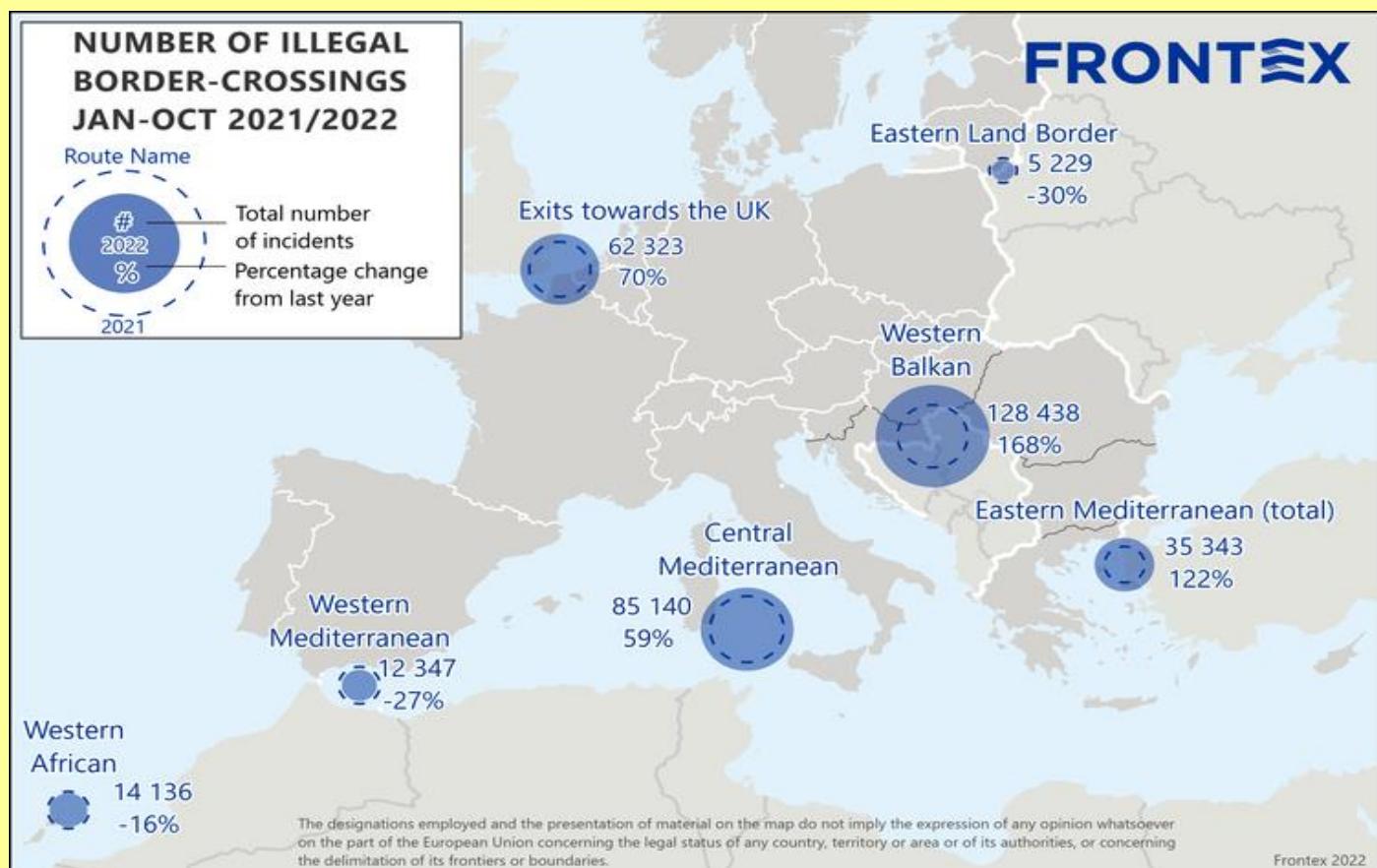
Nov 14 – In the first ten months of this year, 281 000 irregular entries were detected at the external borders of the European Union, according to preliminary calculations.* This represents an increase of 77% compared with the same period of last year and is the highest since 2016. The Western Balkan route into the European Union remains the most active.

In October, EU Member States recorded about 42 000 irregular crossings, 71% more than in the same month in 2021.

In total, more than 2 300 standing corps officers and Frontex staff are taking part in various operational activities at the EU external border.

Key developments:

- 281 000 irregular entries recorded in first ten months of 2022
- 42 000 irregular entries recorded in October
- Western Balkan route is the most active
- Western Mediterranean, Eastern Land Border routes see drops in detections



Top migratory routes:

The **Western Balkan route** continues to be the most active migratory route into the EU with more than 22 300 detections in October, nearly three times as many as a year ago.

So far this year, the Western Balkan region has registered the highest number of detections since the peak of the migration crisis in 2015. The high number of irregular border crossings can be attributed to repeated attempts to cross the border by migrants already present in the Western Balkans, but also to persons abusing visa-free access to the region. Some migrants using visa-free access travel through Belgrade airport and then overland towards the EU external borders.

Responding to this extraordinary migratory pressure, Frontex supports the Western Balkan Countries with more than 500 standing corps officers and staff in the region.

Meanwhile, the **Central Mediterranean route** has seen a 59% rise in the number of irregular border crossings detected in the January-October period, increasing to over 85 000, making this the second most active migratory route into the EU.

In the first ten months of 2022, the number of irregular migrants detected in the **Channel** stood at 62 000, which represents a 70% increase compared to the same period in 2021, including both attempts and crossings in small boats. This trend is expected to surge before the winter conditions makes more difficult the sea crossings.

Route	January-October 2022	October 2022	October 2021/October 2022	Top nationalities
Western Balkans	128 400	22 318	+159%	Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey
Central Mediterranean	85 000	13 000	+81%	Egypt, Tunisia, Bangladesh
Eastern Mediterranean	35 300	2 882	+10%	Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria
Western African	14 100	1 803	-50%	Morocco, Senegal
Western Mediterranean	12 300	1 895	-2%	Algeria, Morocco, Syria
Eastern Border	5 229	441	-44%	Ukraine, Iraq, Belarus

Due to the large number of arrivals and delays in reporting the press release was updated on 15 November.

*The figure includes other less active migratory routes not mentioned in this press release. The final figures may be higher due to delayed reporting.

Wellcome Collection in London shuts 'racist, sexist and ableist' medical history gallery

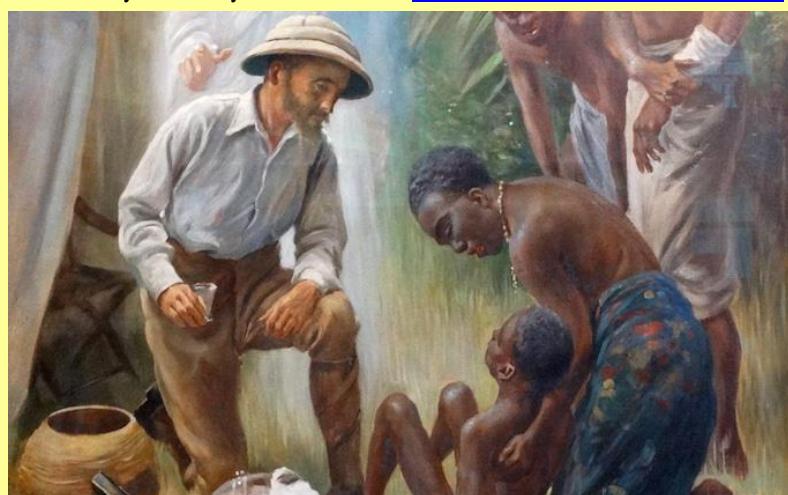
Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/nov/27/wellcome-collection-in-london-shuts-racist-sexist-and-ableist-medical-history-gallery>

Nov 27 – A museum in London run by the Wellcome foundation health charity is to close one of its key galleries because it perpetuates “a version of medical history that is based on racist, sexist and ableist theories and language”.





The [Wellcome Collection](#)'s announcement on Saturday affects a free permanent display called Medicine Man, which includes objects relating to sex, birth and death and includes anatomical models in wood, ivory and wax dating back to the 17th century. These were collected by Sir Henry Wellcome who [amassed more than a million items](#) on the history of health and medicine.



"The very fact that these items have ended up in one place, the story we told was that of a man with enormous wealth, power and privilege," the museum said on Twitter.

[A Medical Missionary Attending to a Sick African](#) has previously been identified as a problematic work at the museum
Credit: Alamy

The announcement was welcomed by some Twitter followers but attacked by several others. "An act of cultural vandalism to close without even having any idea of what will take its place," wrote one.

"Is there no one who can get rid of these cultural vandals instead or does the rot go all the way to the top? Is this

the prelude to whole museums closing because their collections aren't woke enough?" another asked.

The director of the [Wellcome Collection](#), Melanie Keen, was appointed in 2019. A year later she pledged to be courageous in dealing with the most contentious items on display there. "It feels like an impossible place to be worrying about this material we hold without interrogating what it is, what narratives there are to be understood in a more profound way, and how the material came to be in our collection," she said.

Keen highlighted one painting of a black African kneeling in front of a white missionary. "A Medical Missionary Attending to a Sick African" (1916) by Harold Copping, which she has since had put in storage on the grounds that it risked [perpetuating racial stereotypes](#) and hierarchies".





Other interventions have been made since then but the latest announcement said the Medicine Man display “still perpetuates a version of medical history that is based on racist, sexist and ableist theories and language”.

“When our founder, Henry Wellcome started collecting in the 19th century, the aim then was to acquire vast numbers of objects that would enable a better understanding of the art and science of healing throughout the ages.

“The result was a collection that told a global story of health and medicine in which disabled people, Black people, Indigenous peoples and people of colour were exoticised, marginalised and exploited – or even missed out altogether. As a result we will close Medicine Man on 27 November 2022.”

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Pure stupidity in the name of equality ...



NATO's China Challenge

By Michael Trinkwalder

Source: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/natos-china-challenge/>

October 2022 – The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) claims to have no intention of moving into the Indo-Pacific, but in the interest of global security it still should. Some argue that when it comes to China there is no role for NATO. As of 2022, the alliance officially disagrees. Admittedly, it appears fairly unlikely that the People’s Republic of China will conduct an “armed attack” in either Europe or North America in the foreseeable future. However, even against the backdrop of Russia’s war against Ukraine, Beijing’s growing international assertiveness has been formally recognized as a “systemic challenge” to NATO’s values, interests, and security. Despite, or rather because of, the Russia-Ukraine War, the West finally appears willing to take on the challenge of a rising China – perhaps even in the Indo-Pacific.



From a Single Sentence to a Strategic Challenge

NATO-China relations were virtually non-existent until the early 2000s and even then, they mostly took the form of informal visits and military staff talks. As recently as 2019, China barely merited a single rather bland sentence in the traditional common statement after a NATO leaders’ meeting. At the behest of the United States, the alliance recognized the potential threat posed by China to the rules-based international order at its 2021 summit, but the summit communique remained tantalizingly vague on how to respond.

Arguably, it was Beijing’s bad timing more than anything else that finally broke the impasse between China “hawks” and “doves” within the alliance. On February 4, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin came together to announce a “no limits” partnership. What was most remarkable about their meeting from a Western perspective was Beijing essentially copying Russia’s negative rhetoric on NATO expansion and behavior. This happened mere weeks before the start of the Kremlin’s ill-fated invasion of Ukraine, and there has been no Chinese course correction since. What was perhaps intended as nothing more than a throwaway gesture toward Moscow instead inadvertently linked the China challenge to the Russian threat. Moscow’s and Beijing’s actions are now increasingly regarded as “mutually reinforcing attempts to undercut the rules-based international order” in the minds of Western leaders. Unsurprisingly, Beijing’s “wolf warrior” diplomats were not particularly amused by this development, with the official response again closely mirroring Russian rhetoric.

The Indispensable Partnership

Unfortunately for NATO, the “China challenge” is strongest in areas where the alliance has neither competencies nor expertise, including investment screening or economic and technology policy. Yet the organization can still provide added value by seeking out those who do. In Europe, the alliance’s natural partner in the politico-economic sphere is the European Union (EU), which has recently taken a much more active role on China. NATO could offer the EU preferential access to the alliance’s expertise in the areas of security analysis, strategic foresight, and military risk assessment. While there is already some informal information sharing, a more structured relationship would facilitate a better Euro-Atlantic response to China’s rise. This partnership would be particularly relevant in regard to the security implications of Chinese investments in Europe. After all, conducting military operations in the Mediterranean could become rather difficult, if the ports the alliance wants to use “are not only built by but owned by [the] Chinese.”

When it comes to pursuing a closer relationship with the EU, the North Atlantic alliance is charging through open doors. Both organizations will soon share 23 member countries; meanwhile, China-EU relations have





steadily worsened over the last few years. A case in point: Brussels has been working furiously on creating a policy toolbox aimed at curtailing predatory Chinese behavior. Among the [plethora of EU measures](#) being implemented, the so-called “[anti-coercion instrument](#)” stands out in particular. Its purpose is to prevent outside actors from singling out individual EU countries for economic blackmail as Beijing did earlier this year [with Lithuania](#). In the years since the EU first labeled the People’s Republic a “[systemic rival](#),” this assessment has increasingly become the dominant prism through which many Europeans regard the relationship. In other words, the prospects for a more unified transatlantic position on China have never been better and the Ukraine war is likely to push EU and NATO [even closer together](#).

NATO Moving into the Indo-Pacific?

While NATO professes no intention of “[moving into the South China Sea](#),” it seems doubtful for how much longer the alliance can remain disinterested in the affairs of the Indo-Pacific. The region is not only fast becoming the global economic center of gravity, but also the most significant focal point for geopolitical competition in the 21st century. Additionally, a military escalation over Taiwan would almost certainly draw in the United States and have [catastrophic repercussions](#) for Europe. Consequently, European NATO members also have a vested interest in maintaining stability in the region. Several [leading European powers](#) have already published Indo-Pacific strategies and are stepping up their [military presence](#) in the region. Nevertheless, these efforts have been ill-coordinated and are characterized by [widely diverging means, approaches and ambitions](#). So, what would be more logical than Europe’s primary security provider taking on a stronger role in coordinating the military efforts of its members in East Asia? Out-of-area missions are far from unusual for NATO, with the alliance engaging in numerous anti-piracy, stabilization, and training operations around the globe over the last decades. In fact, NATO has already established official partnerships with [multiple Indo-Pacific countries](#), several of which have contributed troops to its missions. By deepening these relationships, NATO could provide added value when it comes to military contingency planning, improving joint exercises and enhancing interoperability with partners in the region. In order to manage these new responsibilities and to signal its commitment, the alliance should also establish a [small permanent headquarters](#) for the Indo-Pacific. If Russia’s war in Ukraine should teach us anything, it’s that deterring military adventurism is much cheaper than having to reverse it. The collective commitment of the most powerful military alliance in history has a better chance of [deterring Chinese aggression](#) against Taiwan than the uncoordinated action of individual countries – no matter how powerful they may be. During its storied past, NATO has shown itself to be highly adaptable to the needs of its members: The organization went from an almost exclusive focus on territorial defense during the confrontation with the Soviet Union to providing solutions for a much broader array of threats ranging from [international terrorism](#) to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). If NATO wishes to stay relevant, the North Atlantic alliance must yet again reinvent itself, this time for an age of global great power competition. For the time being, Russia will remain the primary threat to NATO. However, where Russia is like a hurricane, China is more akin to climate change. The former is the more pressing issue and could prove highly destructive, but the other poses the more serious long-term threat. Indeed, just like climate change will exacerbate natural disasters, a revisionist China could turbocharge the problem of Russian aggression and vice versa. Although there has been little evidence of direct Chinese support for the war in Ukraine, this could still change if a Russian defeat threatens to turn into a major reversal for Beijing’s revisionist agenda. Deterring this budding alliance from further destructive actions on the international stage will likely require a broad coalition of like-minded actors. As a natural nexus for international security cooperation, NATO has an important part to play in bringing such a group together – be it in Europe or East Asia.

Michael Trinkwalder is a mobility security analyst at A3M Global Monitoring and a Manfred Wörner Fellow of the German Armed Forces.

President Joe Biden Starts to Lift Sanctions on Venezuela

At the end of 2022, Venezuela is very different from how it was in 2019. Back then Juan Guaidó, a little-known opposition leader, was supported by Donald Trump’s American administration and much of the Western world. He looked, for a moment, as if he might be able to oust from power the deeply unpopular left-wing dictator Nicolás Maduro, who had rigged an election the previous year. But Mr Guaidó and his backers misjudged the loyalty Mr Maduro and Hugo Chávez, his predecessor from 1999 to 2013, had bought from the military top brass. They underestimated the regime’s ruthlessness. And they have been wrongfooted by the war in Ukraine, which has created an environment in which the United States is rethinking its relationship [with oil producers](#).

EDITOR'S COMMENT: There is a Greek saying dictating that “we do not lick where we spit”!







Germany Did Research with North Korea – Despite UN Sanctions

By Esther Felden (DW journalist)

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221128-germany-did-research-with-north-korea-despite-un-sanctions>

Nov 28 – The email is only a few sentences long, but it was sent from the most unlikely location: North Korea's capital, Pyongyang. The message came from Im Song Jin, a physicist and expert in laser optics, in response to a DW request. Im is one of a privileged few. To have an email address and be permitted to communicate with the outside world is a sign that he is trusted by the North Korean regime.

Im confirmed to DW that between 2008 and 2010 he was a visiting scientist at the Max Born Institute for Nonlinear Optics and Short Pulse Spectroscopy (MBI) in Berlin. And after that? "I have a business e-mail address in Kim Il Sung University," Im wrote. "By using this e-mail address we communicated and continued collaboration works."

His last joint publication with an MBI colleague appeared in an established specialist magazine in the summer of 2020. This was nearly four years after United Nation member states were called upon to cease all scientific exchange with North Korea. The UN Security Council wants to prevent North Korea from gaining access to sensitive knowledge and applying it to the production of even more advanced weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Domestic Intelligence Agency Warned in Vain

Germany is one of the United Nations' biggest supporters. So why was the renowned MBI, which is publicly funded, still working with North Korea?

The cooperation continued, even though in 2016 the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's domestic intelligence service, explicitly warned that despite the sanctions, "ongoing North Korean efforts to procure Western technology can be observed, including in Germany."

A DW investigation of the case has revealed a potential German violation of UN sanctions that could have been avoided. The case throws a spotlight on the potential for conflict between Germany's approach to freedom of research and security concerns.

A Series of Missile Tests

Hardly a day goes by without headlines featuring North Korea. Although most of the East Asian country's population is impoverished, it has never fired as many ballistic missiles as it has in 2022. For weeks now, there has also been mounting concern that it might be about to test another nuclear bomb. It has already conducted six such tests: the first in 2006, the most recent in 2017. This is a calculated move by the isolated country: demonstrating strength through weapons technology. Its government sees military development as crucial for regime survival. For that, it needs relevant research and technology.

Since 2006, the United Nations has adopted a total of nine sanctions packages — including heavy restrictions on technology transfer and academic exchange. In 2016, following the fifth nuclear test, the UN Security Council finally resolved that all member states should suspend their scientific collaborations with North Korean researchers.

UN Call to Suspend Research Cooperation

This decision, recorded in Resolution 2321, applies across all fields and disciplines. It covers both basic, theoretical and applied research. Exceptions can only be made within the medical sector, or after assessment on a case-by-case basis. This is intended to prevent the transfer of dual-use knowledge that could be used for both civilian and military purposes.

"The possible military applicability of advanced research is notoriously difficult to substantiate, and extremely simple to deny or conceal," a UN insider told DW. Because of the sensitive subject matter, the person does not want to be named.

The source described the threat of this kind of knowledge transfer as "dangerously real" — and added that the UN sanctions also cover remote scientific collaboration via email and joint authorship: "The concern is that such collaboration could serve to advance the intangible transfer of technology of value to DPRK's weapons programs."

China and Germany Leading Research Collaborators

North Korea's extremely rapid military development since the first nuclear test in 2006 cannot be comprehended without technological progress — which is difficult to achieve without knowledge transfer from outside the country.

This is also substantiated by a study by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in the United States, which has examined North Korea's international research collaborations from 1958 to 2018.





Among the almost 1,150 studies scrutinized, the leading collaborator, by a wide margin, was North Korea's [protecting power China](#), with more than 900 joint publications. It was followed at a considerable distance by Germany, with 139 publications.

Over the past decade, one German name in particular stands out: the MBI researcher Joachim Herrmann. He was involved in several research collaborations that the authors of the American study regard as dual-use risks.

The MBI is a non-profit research institution. It receives half its funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and half in subsidies from the German federal states. In response to an enquiry from DW, the MBI directorate wrote: "The MBI does not conduct any military research, only basic civil research into and using lasers."

Physicist Herrmann has been researching at the institute since its foundation in 1992, continuing even after his retirement. DW contacted him by phone, but he declined to speak on the record.

Two North Koreans in Berlin

[Herrmann and the physicist Im Song Jin met in Berlin in late 2008 when the North Korean came on a German Academic Exchange Service scholarship.](#)

A few months later, a second North Korean, Kim Kwang Hyon, arrived at the MBI on a scholarship from the Daimler-Benz Foundation. Kim stayed until 2012 and completed his doctorate.

When Im returned home in 2010, he maintained personal contact with Herrmann. Im had made a good impression at the MBI and was thought of as a particularly fine mind. The two scientists continued to work remotely by email.

Between 2017 and 2020, there were a total of nine MBI publications by Herrmann in collaboration with North Korean scientists. Im worked on eight of them, while the former Ph.D. student Kim worked on the ninth. New North Korean names also appear as co-authors: Im had brought his students on board.

All the joint articles are in the public domain. All deal with basic research in the field of laser technology, which is not geared toward a specific practical goal. However, this does not preclude further development, including military use, at a later date.

Expert Verdict on Dual-Use Risk Is Mixed

[DW separately asked 10 independent physicists and disarmament experts to assess the most recent publication between Herrmann and Im.](#)

Among the six physicists, opinions differed. Three judged the study to be innocuous, while three believed it had potential for military application in the future.

All four disarmament experts interviewed expressed alarm — especially Katsuhisa Furukawa. From 2011 to 2016, the Japanese analyst was a member of the UN panel of experts that monitors sanctions on North Korea.

His conclusion was that while the individual paper may be unproblematic, the cooperation as a whole is not. "I am deeply concerned that it has contributed to North Korea's understanding and advancement of various scientific disciplines that could eventually have contributed to the country's WMD program," he told DW.

Furukawa believes that Herrmann's cooperation with the North Korean researchers "very likely constitutes violations by Germany of the UN sanction measures." The former UN official recommended an investigation.

"At a minimum, I think the German government and the Max Born Institute were too poor in the implementation of the UN sanctions, or perhaps deliberately ignorant of the UN sanctions."

Germany Relies on Individual Responsibility

[In Germany, freedom of research is protected by the constitution. Scientists are free to choose their partners and projects — there is no political interference. However, this freedom also entails responsibility.](#)

Researchers have a duty to identify possible dual-use risks themselves. If they have any doubts as to whether partners could also use their research for military purposes, they must contact the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA), which oversees this. The BAFA then checks whether or not joint research can be permitted. The impetus, however, must come from the scientific community itself.

When UN sanctions are involved, as with North Korea, things become extremely complicated. The sanctions are only effective if the governments of UN members implement them in a legally binding way in their respective countries. In the case of Germany, this involves both national and European Union legislation.

In the EU, basic research of the kind carried out by the Max Born Institute is not usually subject to official approval. However, the boundary between basic and applied research is often fluid. Exemption from review of dual-use risks is therefore not automatic, especially when sanctions are involved.





DW asked the federal office about this. It confirmed: “The BAFA examines each individual case to determine whether there is an authorization requirement in this specific instance, and it is happy to assist with delimitation queries.” It added that the assessment would also take the human rights situation in the partner country into account.

However, the Max Born Institute did not contact the BAFA. Consequently, no examination of the case was ever carried out.

MBI Sees It as Government’s Responsibility

Herrmann’s last MBI publication with North Korean scientists appeared in 2020, almost four years after the strengthening of UN sanctions in November 2016. In its written statement to DW, the MBI said it had ended this scientific contact “of its own accord,” because of “growing concern on the directorate about North Korea’s role in international politics.”

Why did this step take so long? The MBI’s position is that the fault mainly lies with the German government. It said the UN resolution to end all scientific cooperation “has not discernibly been implemented in Germany. For example, at no point did we receive a request from the BMBF to suspend scientific contacts with North Korea.”

Obligations to Request and to Supply

Kai Gehring, a Green member of the German Bundestag and chair of its Committee on Education and Research, does not accept this argument. “There are obligations on both sides,” he told DW.

“If anyone working in the scientific field has not realized that there is a comprehensive regime of sanctions against North Korea, I would really want to ask them a number of questions about how such a thing can happen.”

Scientific exchange can be an important channel of communication with authoritarian regimes, in order to promote liberal values and solve global problems like the climate crisis. However, Kai Gehring stressed that with North Korea the red line of scientific diplomacy was crossed long ago. “North Korea is completely authoritarian, and one of the biggest threats to international security.”

Part of the System

The physicists Im and Kim, Herrmann’s research partners, are part of North Korea’s totalitarian system — whether they like it or not. Im now teaches at Kim Il Sung University, Kim Kwang Hyon at the State Academy of Sciences. These two elite institutions are essential to North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic weapons programs. Furukawa, the former United Nations official, confirmed that the UN has already investigated both institutions over “multiple violations of UN sanctions.”

Since his return to North Korea, Im has also published two research papers, most recently in the summer of 2022, with colleagues from [the Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics \(CAEP\)](#). The CAEP also does basic research, but it is principally known for conducting research into, developing and testing China’s nuclear weapons.

Kim, meanwhile, has described North Korea’s fourth nuclear test in January 2016 as a “landmark event,” telling the state-run Pyongyang Times: “I am determined to push ahead with the scientific research to carry out the tasks set forth by the Supreme Leader [...] with the same thinking and in the same working manner as those defense scientists did.”

The Limits of Research Freedom

The conclusion in this case is a painful one: It highlights gaps in Germany’s ability to flag projects at research institutions that could violate international agreements. Despite the high-profile UN sanctions, no one questioned the MBI researcher’s cooperation with North Korea. Scientific self-regulation failed to identify a possible dual-use case, and communication by all parties was inadequate, even though the MBI as an institution is funded by the state.

If failures like these can take place over a longer period of time, even with a case as flagrant as North Korea, it is clear that the system is vulnerable to exploitation.

“There has to be a much closer collaboration between the scientific community and national security authorities,” sanctions expert Furukawa suggested.

Lawmakers are still reluctant to draw clear red lines. The question is a thorny one: In a system where scientists themselves are responsible for flagging suspected dual-use cases, where does freedom of research end? This is especially difficult when it comes to autocratic countries like North Korea, China and Russia.

All German research collaborations with Russia are currently on hold because of its war of aggression against Ukraine. There is a heated debate about [scientific cooperation with China](#). In the field of research, Germany has not yet worked out how to balance freedom-based values and state security interests.

EDITOR’S COMMENT: I am shocked! Germany? On the other hand, there is a tendency to go nuclear, and guess who can assist or even provide what is needed? Just a thought! I am kidding!





German pundit faces backlash over ‘racist’ commentary on Qatari thobe

Source: <https://dohanews.co/german-pundit-faces-backlash-over-racist-commentary-on-qatari-thobe/> <https://dohanews.co/german-pundit-faces-backlash-over-racist-commentary-on-qatari-thobe/>



Nov 28 – German commentator Sandro Wagner has faced backlash for describing the traditional Qatari men’s clothing as “bathrobes”, a remark that has been slammed as “racist” by many on social media.

Wagner, also a former Germany forward, made the derogatory comment during German broadcaster’s ZDF live stream of Sunday’s World Cup match between Berlin and Madrid, the [Associated Press \(AP\)](#) reported.

“Only then did I realise that they are the Qatari bathrobes,” Wagner said during the 79th minute of the game, as quoted by the AP. The traditional thobe is a long, white piece of attire with buttoned sleeves that men in Qatar and the rest of the Gulf commonly wear. Thousands of visitors in Qatar also embraced the thobe, with men from all over the world, mostly from the West, were seen donning the traditional attire while walking around the streets of Doha.

Wagner’s ignited an uproar on social media, as analysts and Qatari residents highlighted the underlying racism behind his remarks. “When you are a racist and uncultured, arrogant and obnoxious the world doesn’t expect much from you. I am not surprised,” [Fahad Al-Ameri](#), Qatari businessman, said in a tweet.

Separately, prominent analyst [Dr. Andreas Krieg](#) quote-tweeted the AP article saying, “Day-to-day racism in Germany”.

[Qatari fans remind Germany of Ozil racism row](#)

Meanwhile, the German broadcaster responded in a short statement to the outrage, saying his comments “occurred during an emotional phase of the game”.

“Sandro Wagner’s comments about the [thobe] unfortunately occurred during an emotional phase of the game. He’s not permitted [to say that]. We’ll talk about it,” it said, as quoted by the AP.

Wagner himself later apologised for his disparaging comments on the thobe, maintaining “it was a well-considered saying”.

“It was a well-considered saying with an inappropriate remark that I could have saved myself. If someone felt attacked – sorry, that was zero point zero my intention,” he said in a German statement, shared by ZDF.

Racism from the West has been a prominent feature of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, following a wider campaign targeting the host nation.

Most Western countries have been accused of applying double standards on the pitch as they continued to criticise Qatar’s human rights record while disregarding its major reform and progress.

Officials in Qatar have also pointed out that no other host nation of the World Cup faced the same level of scrutiny that Doha witnessed.





Last week, Germany's team covered their mouths in their first World Cup game to protest FIFA's banning the "One Love" LGBTQ+ solidarity armbands.

Qatari football fans later hit back at the team's move by covering their mouths on Sunday while holding posters of former Germany player Mesut Ozil.

Ozil, a child of Turkish immigrants who was born in Germany, charged the nation's football federation, supporters, and media with racism in their treatment of persons of Turkish ancestry.

The football player was later shamed out of the team when he posed for a photo with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The player had faced insults during the 2018 World Cup in Russia, forcing him to quit the team.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Certain behaviors and attitudes remain in the genes forever!

Morocco fans riot in Brussels after their team's win over Belgium at the World Cup

Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-11-28/morocco-football-fans-riot-in-belgium-after-fifa-world-cup-win/101704692>



Football fans sporting the flag of Morocco stand on top of a burnt-out car in Brussels after Morocco defeated Belgium at the World Cup in Qatar. (Getty Images: Dursun Aydemir/Anadolu Agency)

Nov 27 – Riots broke out in several Belgian and Dutch cities [after Morocco's 2-0 upset win over Belgium at the World Cup](#).

Police detained about a dozen people after they deployed water cannons and fired tear gas to disperse crowds in Brussels. Dozens of rioters overturned and torched cars, set electric scooters on fire and pelted cars with bricks.

Police moved in after one person suffered facial injuries, said Brussels police spokeswoman Ilse Van de Keere.

Brussels Mayor Philippe Close urged people to stay away from the city centre and said authorities were doing their utmost to keep order in the streets.

Subway and tram traffic had to be interrupted on police orders.

"Those are not fans, they are rioters. Moroccan fans are there to celebrate," Mr Close said.

There were also disturbances in the city of Antwerp and Liege.

"Sad to see how a few individuals abuse a situation to run amok," said Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden.





Police in the neighbouring Netherlands said violence erupted in the port city of Rotterdam, with riot officers attempting to break up a group of 500 soccer supporters who pelted police with fireworks and glass. Media reported unrest in the capital Amsterdam and The Hague.

Morocco's victory was a major upset at the World Cup and was enthusiastically celebrated by fans with Moroccan immigrant roots in many Belgian and Dutch cities.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Grateful legal and illegal immigrants express their love and appreciation for their new homeland which was generous enough to provide a better living environment for them and their families. The benefits of multicultural societies are soon to be seen elsewhere but it would be too late to reverse the mistakes of the past and the stupidity of those ruling our lives.

Non-binary¹ Biden nuclear official charged with stealing woman's luggage at airport

Source: <https://www.yahoo.com/news/non-binary-biden-nuclear-official-235640229.html>

Nov 29 – Sam Brinton, a [senior Energy Department \(DOE\) official](#), was charged with stealing a traveler's luggage in the Minneapolis airport in September, shortly before quietly taking a leave of absence. Brinton — who serves as the DOE's deputy assistant secretary for spent fuel and waste disposition — [allegedly took a Vera Bradley suitcase](#) worth \$2,325 from the luggage carousel at the Minneapolis St. Paul Airport (MSP) on Sept. 16, according to a criminal complaint filed on Oct. 26 in Minnesota state court and obtained by Fox News Digital. Brinton had traveled from Washington, D.C., to MSP that day. After the suitcase's owner alerted police, officers reviewed video surveillance of the carousel and identified Brinton taking the luggage before removing its tag identifying the owner, the court filings stated. Law enforcement observed Brinton using the luggage during at least two other trips to Washington, D.C., on Sept. 18 and Oct. 9.

Then, on Oct. 9, Brinton denied stealing anything when a police officer called to discuss the incident. Brinton confirmed still possessing the suitcase.

"If I had taken the wrong bag, I am happy to return it, but I don't have any clothes for another individual," Brinton told the officer. "That was my clothes when I opened the bag."

Two hours after the phone call, Brinton called the officer back and apologized for not being "completely honest." But Brinton said it was a mistake and blamed being tired for taking the wrong bag at the carousel.

"DEFENDANT said when they opened the bag at the hotel, they realized it was not theirs," the court filings stated. "DEFENDANT got nervous people would think they stole the bag and did not know what to do. DEFENDANT stated they left the clothes from the bag inside the drawers in the hotel room."



¹ Non-binary or genderqueer is an umbrella term for gender identities that are not solely male or female—identities that are outside the gender binary. Based on the sole criterion of production of reproductive cells, there are two and only two sexes: the female sex, capable of producing large gametes (ovules), and the male sex, which produces small gametes (spermatozoa).



**Some 3.6 billion people face
inadequate access
to fresh water
for at least one month
per year**



That is forecast to rise to more than five billion by 2050.

Between 2001 and 2018,
74 percent of all-natural disasters
were water-related, according to UN

**Brinton was ultimately charged with felony theft of a movable property without consent, a charge that could result in a five-year sentence, \$10,000 fine or both.**

Minnesota-based outlet Alpha News first reported the charges against Brinton on Monday.

Brinton was placed on leave about a month ago and another official was named as a replacement in the interim earlier this month, according to the Exchange Monitor which tracks government hires. The [DOE originally didn't explain](#) why Brinton took leave at the time. "Sam Brinton is on leave from DOE, and Dr. Kim Petry is performing the duties of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Spent Fuel and Waste Disposition," a DOE spokesperson told Fox News Digital in a statement.

In June, Brinton made headlines after assuming the position in the DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy as one of the government's first-ever non-binary officials. "There's been a lot of people who are quite upset that don't think that I am quite as qualified as others," Brinton told E&E News in October. "I respond with multiple graduate degrees from MIT, a decade of working in nuclear policy and the strongest enthusiasm for working in nuclear waste out of anybody." Brinton's lawyer didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

EDITOR'S COMMENT:

This box was intentionally left blank

It is not art!

Catalonia, Spain – Crack soil on dry season (2022)

Approximately 500 people, rescued from the waters of the Mediterranean Sea by the Romanian border police

Source: <https://border-security-report.com/approximately-500-people-rescued-from-the-waters-of-the-mediterranean-sea-by-the-romanian-border-police/>

Nov 17 – The maritime surveillance vessel MAI 1102 belonging to the Romanian Border Police participated in the Joint Operation "THEMIS" 2022 – Italy, organized by the European Agency FRONTEX (European Border Police and Coast Guard Agency) that took place at the external maritime borders of the EU.

The Romanian Border Police vessel performed individual patrol, surveillance, search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea, at the external maritime border in southern Italy, alongside the police and law enforcement forces of all EU member states participating in the mission.





During the mission, the ship's crew, made up of 28 border police officers, carried out 1,143 hours of patrolling at sea and participated in 6 search and rescue operations at sea. The Romanian border police rescued, transshipped and transported 484 people (men, women and children), of different nationalities, who were in danger on overcrowded and small boats sailing in the Mediterranean Sea and who, later, were taken over to the Italian authorities for the performance of specific formalities. The main objective of the Joint Operation "THEMIS" was to support the Italian authorities in the surveillance and control of the maritime borders of the European Union, as well as the search and rescue of persons in distress at sea (Search and Rescue) at the external border of the European Union. The activity is a continuation of the border control operations organized by Frontex, in which the Romanian Border Police made a significant contribution, both in terms of technical means and in terms of numbers, profiles and results obtained by seconded experts, the assessments coming both from the Italian authorities and from the Agency. The operation was financed by Frontex.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: To understand well, the Romanian vessel "saved" almost 500 people, but they delivered them to Italian authorities? Why not taken them home? Are we all EU or not?

Ukrainian refugees in Wales will have to start paying for meals and laundry

Source: <https://nation.cymru/news/ukrainian-refugees-in-wales-will-have-to-start-paying-for-meals-and-laundry/>

Dec 01 – Refugees who have fled war-torn Ukraine to live in Wales will have to start contributing towards the costs of meals and laundry, the Welsh Government has announced.

The changes will see people having to contribute to some of their costs after a five-week settling in period.

After five weeks, refugees will either be in receipt of Universal Credit, assessed as ineligible due to savings or be employed, the Welsh Government said.

Further changes will see anyone refusing "two reasonable" offers of accommodation facing a weekly service charge of between £25-£37, depending on the household's size.

Almost 3,000 people have travelled to Wales under the Homes for Ukraine scheme after fleeing Russia's illegal invasion.



They have been staying in welcome centres or hotels, universities and holiday parks while they find work and settle into life in Wales. The Welsh Government said more than 500 people have now moved into longer-term accommodation and homes of their own.

Proud

Jane Hutt, minister for social justice, said: "I'm proud we have been able to welcome so many people here and humbled so many people are living independently in Wales."

"I also want to thank everyone who has opened their home to provide sanctuary and safety to someone from Ukraine."

"We continue to show our support for people from Ukraine and are committed to being a Nation of Sanctuary."

"We are continuing to work with local authorities and the third sector to support move on."

"This includes bringing forward more longer-term accommodation for everyone in housing need through our £60 million transitional accommodation capital programme."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Could this idea be applicable to Greece receiving refugees from Syria? Most probably they can afford paying a little something since their mobiles are costing approximately 1,000 euros!

Major Global Security Challenges

By Joshua Dunne, Jasmine Latimore, Yvonne Lau, Hsi-Ting Pai, Stephan Robin and Ben Stevens

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221201-major-global-security-challenges>

Dec 01 – What are the major threats the world is facing? Researchers highlight five such threats: The growing role of disinformation; attacks on the idea of democracy; environmental challenges; economic instability; and terrorism – both domestic and foreign.

Planet A

Delegates to the COP27 summit from nearly 200 countries last weekend agreed to establish a '[loss and damage](#)' fund, which is intended to compensate developing and climate-vulnerable countries that suffer from global heating and weather extremes. The fund is a response to longstanding calls for industrialised nations to pay climate reparations and has been described as a new method to [build trust and solidarity](#).

Details of the fund, including financial and structural arrangements, still need to be negotiated and considerable challenges to securing funding remain. It's also unclear whether current bilateral arrangements, such as Australia's [climate change and resilience funding](#) to the Pacific, might change under this new deal.

While the announcement of the fund has brought some optimism in the climate fight, the summit's failure to reach agreement on a strong commitment to curbing fossil fuels has many [worried about the prospects for](#) limiting warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, which will ultimately determine the extent and severity of [climate disruptions](#).

Democracy Watch

The human cost of Iran's anti-regime protests continues to rise, with latest estimates putting the death toll at [more than 300](#). Around [16,000 protestors](#) have been arrested so far, and human rights groups are raising the alarm about the [experiences of minors](#) in the government crackdown. At least 33 people under the age of 18 have been [killed by security forces](#) and an estimated 500–1,000 minors are being held in detention.

Sparked initially by outrage at the death in police custody of Iranian woman Mahsa Amini on 16 September, the protests have come to represent people's broad dissatisfaction with the power of hardline clerics in the Islamic republic, with women and young people [taking a leading role](#). The protests show few signs of abating, and government forces are turning to [increasingly brutal](#) methods of repression. Security forces are now [reportedly raiding schools](#) to intimidate and arrest students suspected of having any connection to or sympathies with the protests. Between the heavy-handed response from the government and the clear determination of the protestors, prospects for a peaceful resolution appear dim.

Information Operations

French President Emmanuel Macron has [accused](#) Russia of conducting a disinformation campaign in Africa that seeks to undermine France's reputation and interests by [blaming the West](#) for current food shortages. Macron said he was also concerned that other states were pushing predatory misinformation to gain greater influence across the continent.





ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

Macron's statements were issued in an interview with a French TV channel during [the 18th summit](#) of the International Organization of La Francophonie in Tunisia. The [OIF](#) is an international organization representing 88 member countries with large French-speaking populations.

The OIF conference and Macron's interview came after the [formal withdrawal](#) of French troops from Mali at the start of this month. France pulled its troops out from an eight-year counterterrorism campaign against jihadi groups following a [coup in 2021](#), which resulted in Mali's new military government inviting the Russian [Wagner mercenary group](#) to train and assist its forces. The withdrawal of French troops and ongoing Russian disinformation will potentially weaken France's influence and bolster Russia's power in West Africa.

Follow the Money

Australia is under increasing pressure to impose economic sanctions on Myanmar's military junta. A recent [Amnesty International report](#) exposed supply chain links to Myanmar's military rulers and called for states [to suspend exports](#) of aviation fuel to the country. After [leaked documents revealed](#) transactions between ANZ Bank and Innwa Bank—owned by military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation—ANZ faced significant pressure to cease operations in Myanmar. The revelations also prompted requests for Australia to join the UK, US and EU in introducing financial measures against Myanmar Economic Corporation.

While [Australia has](#) banned arms exports to Myanmar and frozen the assets of five military commanders of the regime, the government has been reluctant to impose broad sanctions. One of the reasons for this was the uncertainty surrounding the fate of an Australian citizen being held in Myanmar. Last week, however, Sean Turnell, an economist and adviser to deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi, [was released from prison](#) in Myanmar and returned home to Australia.

Yet if Australia imposes sanctions now, it may lose the bargaining chip [thought to be instrumental](#) in Turnell's release. That raises the question of how Australia can maintain its negotiating power while assisting the international community in limiting the junta's access to the global financial system.

Terror Byte

Turkish police have [arrested 17 suspects](#) accused of facilitating the street bombing that [killed six and injured at least 80](#) civilians on Istanbul's crowded Istiklal Avenue two weeks ago. While Turkish authorities are reporting that the [suspected bomber](#) confessed her connection to the militant [Kurdistan Workers' Party](#) in interrogations, the [globally blacklisted](#) Kurdish terror group [is denying](#) any involvement.

Nonetheless, Turkey launched retaliatory airstrikes against almost 100 [Kurdish targets](#) throughout Syria and Iraq, reportedly killing [many terrorists](#). Kurdish forces, unable to counter Turkish airpower, responded with [mortar attacks](#) from inside Syria that [killed a teacher and student](#) when shells landed in a school near the Syrian border.

Following the airstrikes, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised '[serious concerns](#)' internationally when he said that the operation wouldn't be [limited to](#) an air campaign. Turkish airstrikes in Syria's north are now compounding the widespread damage wrought by [Israeli](#) and [Russian raids](#) further south, prompting commentators to suggest that the airstrikes mark '[a new era](#)' in the ongoing Syrian war.

Joshua Dunne, Jasmine Latimore, Yvonne Lau, Hsi-Ting Pai, Stephan Robin and Ben Stevens are research interns at ASPI.

Iran prosecutor general signals 'morality police' suspended

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/4/iran-prosecutor-general-signals-morality-police-suspended>

Dec 04 – Iran has suspended its morality police, the Iranian prosecutor general said as protests in the country continue into the third month.

The [protests erupted](#) shortly after the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was arrested by a unit of the morality police in Tehran for allegedly not adhering to the country's mandatory dress code for women.

Speaking on Saturday at an event about "outlining the hybrid war during recent riots", which is how Iranian officials describe alleged foreign influence in the unrest, Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri was quoted as saying by local media that morality police operations are over.

The morality police "has no connection with the judiciary and was shut down by the same place that it had been launched from in the past", he said, reportedly answering a question on why the morality police have been shut down.



There were no other confirmations that the work of the [patrolling units](#) – officially tasked with ensuring “moral security” in the society – has been terminated. Montazeri also did not say the morality police have been indefinitely scrapped.

Moreover, there was no indication the law that imposes the mandatory dress code will be terminated.

The [forces would ride around](#) in white and green vans, mostly telling women on the streets to fix their headscarves or taking them to so-called “re-education” centres if deemed required, but the vans have not been seen around Tehran or other cities recently.

It was in one of those centres where Amini appeared to suffer a stroke as shown by security camera footage the authorities released. She died in a nearby hospital after being in a coma for three days.

A final report by the coroner’s office [claimed she died as a result of pre-existing conditions](#), but her family said they suspected she was beaten.

Persisting unrest

Women have featured prominently in the protests that started after Amini’s death, with her name and images widely used inside and outside the country. Women have also burned their head coverings and cut off their hair in displays of protest and solidarity. “Woman, life, freedom,” has become the rallying cry for protesters.

Iranian authorities have accused the United States, Israel, European powers and Saudi Arabia of being behind the persisting unrest, saying they used Amini’s death as an “excuse” to target the country and its foundations.

The hijab, which has been mandatory since shortly after the country’s 1979 Islamic revolution, has been a central ideological issue for Iranian authorities, who have repeatedly said they will not back down from it.

They have, however, recently signalled they may revise the ways in which the mandatory dress rules are implemented without specifying details. A number of local officials previously hinted at methods such as using artificial intelligence or camera footage to impose financial penalties on perceived offenders. Drivers who are seen to be flouting the hijab rules already receive warnings and fines and could ultimately have their vehicles impounded in case of repeat offences.

Are we sure about it?



HERESY ALERT: Yuval Noah Harari Says Jesus Christ “Basically Just a Hippie” Never Claimed to Be God

Source: <https://welovetrump.com/2022/11/26/heresy-alert-yuval-noah-harari-says-jesus-christ-basically-just-a-hippie-never-claimed-to-be-god/>

This is a bad one...

But we don’t ignore bad stuff, we put a spotlight on it and expose it right out in the open! We take a flamethrower to it!

And today the target is this truly evil man, Yuval Noah Harari.

We’ve covered him before.

He’s Klaus (anal) Schwab’s best friend and he’s trying to usher in the robot revolution.

He wants to transform himself into basically a computer so he can live forever.

He has had a list of massive heresy’s in the past, including saying God’s design is “outdated” and he’s going to make a better design.

Then saying God is dead, it’s just taking a while to get rid of the body.

And his latest: Jesus Christ never claimed to be God. He was “basically just a hippie”.

This guy really is a piece of work...



EDITOR’S COMMENT: Alphabet letters #6 and #21!

Cristiano Ronaldo | Bugatti Centodieci: 8,000,000 euros



**2 surgeons after successfully removing
a set of brain tumors during a 32 hour
surgery.**



A Year of Colliding Consequences – The Global Catastrophic Risks Report 2022

Source: <https://globalchallenges.org/a-year-of-colliding-consequences-the-global-catastrophic-risks-report-2022/>

Nov 30 – Ukraine war, nuclear risk, climate change, Covid intersect to create unprecedented ‘polycrisis’. Global catastrophic risks have intensified at an unprecedented rate in 2022, intersecting and reinforcing each other with far-reaching consequences.

The annual report, with the 2022-edition titled: A Year of Colliding Consequences, is the foundation’s review of major global risks that threaten at least ten per cent of humanity. This year’s report flags complex convergence of global threats. This report is released in the wake of the failure of the COP27 climate talks to agree strong measures to curb fossil fuel production, and as the ripple effects of the Ukraine war continue to be felt worldwide in terms of heightened nuclear risk, severe food and energy insecurity, surging inflation and poverty.

The Global Challenges Foundation calls on the international community to urgently push forward new initiatives to understand and manage this complex convergence of global risks.

Jens Orback, Executive Director of the Global Challenges Foundation: “*This year of global risks and colliding consequences highlights the need for an urgent upgrade of international cooperation. We need better information*

on how global risks are reinforcing each other and better mechanisms to allow us to manage them in a more holistic way.”

“The crisis in Ukraine is compounding the severe impacts of climate change and the pandemic in many parts of the world, while slowing attempts to deal with a heating planet. Meanwhile, the destruction of our natural environment also heightens the risk of new pandemics.”

Orback highlights several proposed initiatives to better manage converging global risks including:

- A global cooperation of scientific institutes to study the mechanisms amplifying, accelerating and synchronising systemic risks, as proposed by among others Johan Rockström, GCF Board member and Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.
- Proposals from the United Nations Secretary-General’s 2021 Our Common Agenda report such as an *Emergency Platform* that would be triggered by a major crisis such as the use of a nuclear weapon and coordinate a global response, and the revival of the UN’s Trusteeship Council, as a multi-stakeholder body to tackle emerging challenges and to act to preserve the global commons on behalf of future generations.
- A tax on carbon emissions with the revenue going to those most affected by climate change. Both a global tax and national taxes at a minimum level would be positive pathways forward.

The risk of nuclear conflict is one that has intensified in 2022 with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. For the Global Catastrophic Risks report, Dr Kennette Benedict of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists

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in Chicago writes that it is now more likely than ever that nuclear weapons will be used in either military actions, miscalculation or by accident than at any time since the beginning of the nuclear age. “Only with a clear understanding of each of the global risks facing humanity can we move forward to rethink how we could better manage them,” says GCF’s Jens Orback. “And only with new kinds of global cooperation can we deal with the complex web of interlocking and reinforcing global risks to ensure a habitable, safe and peaceful future.”

Musk’s Neuralink faces federal inquiry after killing 1,500 animals in testing

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/dec/05/neuralink-animal-testing-elon-musk-investigation>



Dec 06 – Elon Musk’s Neuralink, a medical device company, is under federal investigation for potential animal-welfare violations amid internal staff complaints that its animal testing is being rushed, causing needless suffering and deaths, according to documents reviewed by Reuters and sources familiar with the investigation and company operations.

Neuralink Corp is [developing a brain implant](#) it hopes will help paralyzed people walk again and cure other neurological ailments. The federal investigation, which has not been previously reported, was opened in recent months by the US Department of Agriculture’s inspector general at the request of a federal prosecutor, according to two sources with knowledge of the investigation. The inquiry, one of the sources said, focuses on violations of the Animal Welfare Act, which governs how researchers treat and test some animals.

The investigation has come at a time of growing employee dissent about Neuralink’s animal testing, including complaints that pressure from Musk to accelerate development has resulted in botched experiments, according to a Reuters review of dozens of Neuralink documents and interviews with more than 20 current and former employees. Such failed tests have had to be repeated, increasing the number of animals being tested and killed, the employees say. The company documents include previously unreported messages, audio recordings, emails, presentations and reports.



A video grab from the online Neuralink livestream shows Gertrude the pig, implanted with a Neuralink device, during a presentation in 2020. Photograph: Neuralink/AFP/Getty Images

Musk and other Neuralink executives did not respond to requests for comment.

Reuters could not determine the full scope of the federal investigation or whether it involved the same alleged problems with animal testing identified by employees in

Reuters interviews. A spokesperson for the USDA inspector general declined to comment. US regulations don’t specify how many animals companies can use for research, and they give significant leeway to scientists to determine when and how to use animals in experiments. Neuralink has passed all USDA inspections of its facilities, regulatory filings show.

In all, the company has killed about 1,500 animals, including more than 280 sheep, pigs and monkeys, following experiments since 2018, according to records reviewed by Reuters and sources with direct knowledge of the company’s animal-testing operations. The sources characterized that figure as a rough estimate because the company does not keep precise records on the number of animals tested and killed. Neuralink has also conducted research using rats and mice.

The total number of animal deaths does not necessarily indicate that Neuralink is violating regulations or standard research practices. Many companies routinely use animals in experiments to advance human health care, and they face financial pressure to quickly bring products to market. The animals are typically killed when experiments are completed, often so they can be examined post-mortem for research purposes.



But current and former Neuralink employees say the number of animal deaths is higher than it needs to be for reasons related to Musk's demands to speed research. Through company discussions and documents spanning several years, along with employee interviews, Reuters identified four experiments involving 86 pigs and two monkeys that were marred in recent years by human errors.



The mistakes weakened the experiments' research value and required the tests to be repeated, leading to more animals being killed, three of the current and former staffers said. The three people attributed the mistakes to a lack of preparation by a testing staff working in a pressure-cooker environment.

Elon Musk next to a surgical robot during a 2020 presentation. Photograph: Neuralink/AFP/Getty Images

One employee, in a message seen by Reuters, wrote an angry missive this year to colleagues about the need to overhaul

how the company organizes animal surgeries to prevent "hack jobs". The rushed schedule, the employee wrote, resulted in under-prepared and over-stressed staffers scrambling to meet deadlines and making last-minute changes before surgeries, raising risks to the animals. Musk has pushed hard to accelerate Neuralink's progress, which depends heavily on animal testing, current and former employees said. This year, the chief executive sent staffers a news article about Swiss researchers who developed an electrical implant that helped a paralyzed man to walk again. "We could enable people to use their hands and walk again in daily life!" he wrote to staff at 6.37am Pacific time on 8 February. Ten minutes later, he followed up: "In general, we are simply not moving fast enough. It is driving me nuts!"

On several occasions over the years, Musk has told employees to imagine they had a bomb strapped to their heads in an effort to get them to move faster, according to three sources who repeatedly heard the comment. On one occasion a few years ago, Musk told employees he would trigger a "market failure" at Neuralink unless they made more progress, a comment perceived by some employees as a threat to shut down operations, according to a former staffer who heard his comment.

Five people who have worked on Neuralink's animal experiments told Reuters they had raised concerns internally. They said they had advocated for a more traditional testing approach, in which researchers would test one element at a time in an animal study and draw relevant conclusions before moving on to more animal tests. Instead, these people said, Neuralink launches tests in quick succession before fixing issues in earlier tests or drawing complete conclusions. The result: more animals overall are tested and killed, in part because the approach leads to repeated tests.

One former employee who asked management several years ago for more deliberate testing was told by a senior executive it wasn't possible given Musk's demands for speed, the employee said. Two people told Reuters they had left the company over concerns about animal research.

The problems with Neuralink's testing have raised questions internally about the quality of the resulting data, three current or former employees said. Such problems could delay the company's bid to start human trials, which Musk has said the company wants to do within the next six months. They also add to a growing list of headaches for Musk, who is facing criticism of his management of Twitter, which he recently acquired for \$44bn. Musk also continues to run the electric carmaker Tesla and the rocket company SpaceX.

The US Food and Drug Administration is in charge of reviewing the company's applications for approval of its medical device and associated trials. The company's treatment of animals during research, however, is regulated by the USDA under the Animal Welfare Act. The FDA didn't immediately comment.

Missed deadlines, botched experiments

Musk's impatience with Neuralink has grown as the company, which launched in 2016, has missed his deadlines on several occasions to win regulatory approval to start clinical trials in humans, according to company documents and interviews with eight current and former employees.





Some Neuralink rivals are having more success. Synchron, which was launched in 2016 and is developing a different implant with less ambitious goals for medical advances, received FDA approval to start human trials in 2021. The company's device has allowed paralyzed people to text and type by thinking alone. Synchron has also conducted tests on animals, but it has killed only about 80 sheep as part of its research, according to studies of the Synchron implant reviewed by Reuters. Musk approached Synchron about a potential investment, Reuters reported in August.

Synchron declined to comment.

In some ways, Neuralink treats animals quite well compared with other research facilities, employees said in interviews, echoing public statements by Musk and other executives. Company leaders have boasted internally of building a "Monkey Disneyland" in the company's Austin, Texas, facility where lab animals can roam, a former employee said. In the company's early years, Musk told employees he wanted the monkeys at his San Francisco Bay Area operation to live in a "monkey Taj Mahal", said a former employee

who heard the comment. Another former employee recalled Musk saying he disliked using animals for research but wanted to make sure they were "the happiest animals" while alive.

The animals have fared less well, however, when used in the company's research, current and former employees say.



Musk holds a Neuralink implant at the 2020 presentation. Photograph: Neuralink/AFP/Getty Images

The first complaints about the company's testing involved its initial partnership with University of California, Davis, to conduct the experiments. In February, an animal rights group, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, filed a complaint with the USDA accusing the Neuralink-UC Davis project of botching surgeries that killed monkeys, and publicly released its findings. The group alleged that surgeons used the wrong surgical glue twice, which led to two

monkeys suffering and dying, while other monkeys had different complications from the implants.

The company has acknowledged it killed six monkeys, on the advice of UC Davis veterinary staff, because of health problems caused by experiments. It called the issue with the glue a "complication" from the use of an "FDA-approved product". In response to a Reuters inquiry, a UC Davis spokesperson shared a previous public statement defending its research with Neuralink and saying it followed all laws and regulations.

A federal prosecutor in the northern district of California referred the animal rights group's complaint to the USDA inspector general, which has since launched a formal investigation, according to a source with direct knowledge of it. USDA investigators then inquired about the allegations involving the UC Davis monkey research, according to two sources familiar with the matter and emails and messages reviewed by Reuters.

The investigation is concerned with the testing and treatment of animals in Neuralink's own facilities, one of the sources said, without elaborating. In 2020, Neuralink brought the program in-house, and it has since built its extensive facilities in California and Texas. A spokesperson for the US attorney's office for the northern district of California declined to comment.

Delcianna Winders, director of the Animal Law and Policy Institute at the Vermont Law and Graduate School, said it was "very unusual" for the USDA inspector general to investigate animal research facilities. Winders, an animal-testing opponent who has criticized Neuralink, said the inspector general has primarily focused in recent years on dogfighting and cockfighting actions when applying the Animal Welfare Act.

Employee concerns

The mistakes leading to unnecessary animal deaths included one instance in 2021 when 25 out of 60 pigs in a study had devices that were the wrong size implanted in their heads, an error that could have been avoided with more preparation, according to a person with knowledge of the situation and company documents and communications reviewed by Reuters.

The mistake raised alarm among Neuralink's researchers. In May 2021, Viktor Kharazia, a scientist, wrote to colleagues that the mistake could be a "red flag" to FDA reviewers of the study, which the company planned to submit as part of its application to begin human trials. His colleagues agreed, and the experiment was repeated with 36 sheep, according to the person with knowledge of the situation. All the animals, both the pigs and the sheep, were killed after the procedures, the person said.

Kharazia did not comment in response to requests.





On another occasion, staff accidentally implanted Neuralink's device on the wrong vertebra of two different pigs during two separate surgeries, according to two sources with knowledge of the matter and documents reviewed by Reuters. The incident frustrated several employees who said the mistakes "on two separate occasions" could have easily been avoided by carefully counting the vertebrae before inserting the device.

The company veterinarian Sam Baker advised his colleagues to immediately kill one of the pigs to end her suffering. "Based on low chance of full recovery ... and her current poor psychological wellbeing, it was decided that euthanasia was the only appropriate course of action," Baker wrote colleagues about one of the pigs a day after the surgery, adding a broken heart emoji. Baker did not comment on the incident.

Employees have sometimes pushed back on Musk's demands to move fast. In a company discussion several months ago, some Neuralink employees protested after a manager said that Musk had encouraged them to do a complex surgery on pigs soon. The employees resisted on the grounds that the surgery's complexity would lengthen the amount of time the pigs would be under anesthesia, risking their health and recovery. They argued they should first figure out how to cut down the time it would take to do the surgery.

"It's hard on the little piggies," one of the employees said, referring to the lengthy period under anesthesia.

In September, the company responded to employee concerns about its animal testing by holding a town hall to explain its processes. It soon after opened up the meetings to staff of its federally mandated board that reviews the animal experiments.

Neuralink executives have said publicly that the company tests animals only when it has exhausted other research options, but documents and company messages suggest otherwise. During a 30 November presentation the company broadcast on YouTube, for example, Musk said surgeries were used at a later stage of the process to confirm that the device worked rather than to test early hypotheses. "We're extremely careful," he said, to make sure that testing is "confirmatory, not exploratory", using animal testing as a last resort after trying other methods.

In October, a month before Musk's comments, Autumn Sorrells, the head of animal care, ordered employees to scrub "exploration" from study titles retroactively and stop using it in the future.

Sorrells did not comment in response to requests.

Neuralink records reviewed by Reuters contained numerous references over several years to exploratory surgeries, and three people with knowledge of the company's research strongly rejected the assertion that Neuralink avoids exploratory tests on animals. Company discussions reviewed by Reuters showed several employees expressing concerns about Sorrells' request to change exploratory study descriptions, saying it would be inaccurate and misleading.

One noted that the request seemed designed to provide "better optics" for Neuralink.

Study shows EU residents split on supporting Ukraine, refugees

Source: <https://www.anews.com.tr/world/2022/12/05/study-shows-eu-residents-split-on-supporting-ukraine-refugees>

Dec 05 – Europeans are divided on their willingness to keep supporting Ukrainian refugees, according to a study by the Mercator Forum for Migration and Democracy (MIDEM) at Germany's Dresden University of Technology.

Of those surveyed, 40% of Europeans were in favour of supporting **Ukraine** and accepting any negative consequences in doing so, while 39% said that support for Ukraine should be restricted because of economic and social effects.

In light of the **energy crisis**, support for Ukraine could decrease in the future.

A test of solidarity with Ukraine may be coming up in the next few months, said MIDEM director Hans Vorländer at the presentation of the study on Monday.

According to the study, 55% of Europeans wish to limit immigration of foreigners.

In eastern Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic, a majority of people voted for restricted support of Ukraine.

In countries which have been largely open to refugees, such as Sweden, about two-thirds of respondents voted in favour of supporting Ukraine.

In countries with less experience with refugees, like Poland, the trend is in the opposite direction. There, 42% voted for restrictions. This was a greater fraction than any other European country.

According to researchers, the survey also showed that solidarity did not apply equally to all refugees. "While there is a great willingness to accept and help Ukrainian refugees, scepticism prevails toward refugees from other crisis regions," said Vorländer. Reservations were particularly strong in regards to immigrants from Islamic countries.



Egypt's New Ministry of Defense "Octagon" Complex Looks Like An Alien Base From Space

The sprawling and highly exotic installation is part of a new, fledgling administrative capital located 20 miles east of Cairo.

Source: <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/29762/egypts-new-octagon-ministry-of-defense-complex-looks-like-an-alien-base-from-space>



EDITOR'S COMMENT: Inspired design! I only hope that the offices of the high-level officials and ministers are not in the center octagon – too easy to target with an armed drone.



TIME HEROES OF THE YEAR

Fighting for Freedom
THE WOMEN OF IRAN





War Over Taiwan?

By Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

Source: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/war-over-taiwan-us-china-relationship-by-joseph-s-nye-2022-12>



Dec 02 – For five decades, both China and the US benefited from the time they had bought on the question of the island's status. To prevent what is currently a managed competition from spiraling out of control, the United States should take careful but clear steps to strengthen its longstanding policy of “double deterrence.”

Could the United States and China go to war over Taiwan? China regards the island 90 miles (145 kilometers) off its coast as a renegade province, and President Xi Jinping raised the issue at the recent 20th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Though Xi said he prefers reunification by peaceful means, his objective was clear, and he did not rule out the use of force. Meanwhile, in Taiwan, the share of the population identifying as solely Taiwanese continues to exceed the share that identifies as both Chinese and Taiwanese.

The US has long tried both to dissuade Taiwan from officially declaring independence, and to deter China from using force against the island. But Chinese military capabilities have been increasing, and US President Joe Biden has now said on four separate occasions that the US would defend Taiwan. Each time, the White House has issued “clarifications” stressing that America’s “one China” policy has not changed. But China counters that recent high-level US visits to Taiwan are hollowing out that policy. China responded to US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s trip there in August by firing missiles near the coast of Taiwan. What will happen if Representative Kevin McCarthy becomes speaker of the new Republican-controlled House and carries out his threat to lead an official delegation to the island? When US President Richard Nixon went to China and met with Mao Zedong in 1972, both countries shared an interest in balancing Soviet power, because both saw the USSR as their largest problem.

But now, China has an alignment of convenience with Russia, because both countries see the US as their largest problem. Still, Nixon and Mao could not agree on the Taiwan issue, so they adopted a formula designed to postpone the matter. The US would accept the claim that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait were Chinese, and it would recognize only “one China”: the People’s Republic of China on the mainland, not the Republic of China on Taiwan. The two sides bought time for what Mao’s successor, Deng Xiaoping, called the “wisdom of future generations.” It recalls the fable of a medieval prisoner who delays his execution by promising to teach the king’s horse how to speak. “Who knows?” he says. “The king may die; the horse may die; or the horse may speak.” For five decades, both China and the US benefited from the time they had bought. After Nixon’s visit, the American strategy was to engage China in the hope that increased trade and



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

economic growth would expand its middle class and lead to liberalization. That goal may now sound overly optimistic; but the US policy was not totally naive. As reinsurance, President Bill Clinton reaffirmed the US security treaty with Japan in 1996, and his successor, George W. Bush, improved relations with India. Moreover, there were some signs of liberalization in China at the beginning of this century. Xi, however, has tightened CPC control over civil society and regions like Xinjiang and Hong Kong, as well as signaling his ambition to regain Taiwan.



US relations with China are now at their lowest point in more than 50 years. Some blame former President Donald Trump. But, in historical terms, Trump was more like a boy who poured gasoline on an existing fire. It was Chinese leaders who built the fire with their mercantilist manipulation of the international trading system, theft and coercive transfer of Western intellectual property, and militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea. The US reaction to these moves has been bipartisan. Not until the end of his second year in office did Biden meet face to face with Xi – at the recent G20 summit in Bali. The American objective is still to deter China from using force against the island, and to deter Taiwan's leaders from declaring *de jure* independence. Some analysts refer to this policy as “strategic ambiguity,” but it might also be described as “double deterrence.” In the months before his assassination, former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō was urging the US to commit more clearly to defending Taiwan. Other experts, however, fear that such a policy change would provoke a Chinese response, because it would eliminate the ambiguity that allows Chinese leaders to placate nationalist sentiment. How likely is a conflict? The US chief of naval operations warns that China’s growing naval power may tempt it to act soon in the belief that time is not on its side. Others believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin’s failure in Ukraine has made China more cautious, and that the country will wait until after 2030. Even if China eschews a full-scale invasion and merely tries to coerce Taiwan with a blockade or by taking an offshore island, a ship or aircraft collision could change things quickly, especially if there is loss of life. If the US reacts by freezing Chinese assets or invoking the Trading with the Enemy Act, the two countries could slip into a real (rather than a metaphorical) cold war, or even a hot one. In the absence of the Taiwan issue, the US-China relationship fits the model of what former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd calls “managed strategic competition.” Neither country poses a threat to the other in the way that Hitler’s Germany did in the 1930s or Stalin’s Soviet Union did in the 1950s. Neither is out to conquer the other, nor could they. But a failure to manage the Taiwan issue could turn the conflict into an existential one. The US should continue to discourage formal Taiwanese independence, while helping Taiwan become a difficult-to-swallow “porcupine.” It should also work with allies to strengthen naval deterrence in the region. But it must avoid openly provocative actions and visits that might cause China to accelerate any plans for an invasion. As Nixon and Mao recognized long ago, there is much to be said for strategies and diplomatic arrangements that buy time.

Joseph S. Nye, Jr., a professor at Harvard University and a former US assistant secretary of defense, is the author, most recently, of *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Macron's Plan on Migrants: Deport More, Give Others Legal Status

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/06/world/europe/france-immigration-macron.html>



Dec 06 — The issue of immigration once again took center stage in French politics on Tuesday, as President Emmanuel Macron proposed a tougher stance on deportations, while also extending work opportunities for migrants with needed skills. Mr. Macron’s government is trying to balance pressure from a rising far right to get immigration under control, against France’s need for immigrant labor. Its bill reflects his long-stated willingness to streamline both admissions and deportations, fulfilling a promise he made during his re-election campaign earlier this





year. Recent incidents — including a [schoolgirl's killing](#) by an illegal migrant and the [disputed docking of a migrant rescue vessel](#) — have also pushed the government to try to take the heat out of a combustible issue.

Immigration has long been a fixation of politics in France — the president's proposal would be the country's 29th immigration and asylum law in four decades — where politicians and commentators, particularly on the right, often describe a country fending off an out-of-control influx of migrants. In reality, France has a smaller proportion of immigrants in its population than most of its neighbors, and in the past decade, immigration has grown less there than in the rest of Europe.

For four hours on Tuesday, lawmakers debated Mr. Macron's balancing-act plan, which is expected to come to a vote next spring. The government is hoping to win the votes of opposition members on the left and right, which it needs to pass the bill, after the president's party [lost its absolute majority in the National Assembly](#).

"It is legitimate to raise the question of our migration policy: to say who we want, who we can welcome, and who we don't want, who we can't welcome,"

Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne told the National Assembly, the lower and more powerful house of Parliament.

The main goal of the bill is to streamline the country's sluggish deportation process. Over the past decade, only about 15 percent of migrants ordered to leave actually departed the country, according to a [Senate report](#) released in May.

Under the proposal, the number of possible appeals for rejected asylum seekers would be reduced to four from 12; deportation procedures would be sped up; and some safeguards for foreigners would be removed to make it easier to expel them if they were convicted of crimes. "We must be able to take in more quickly those who deserve asylum, and refuse more quickly those who cannot obtain it on our soil," [Gérald Darmanin](#), Mr. Macron's hard-line interior minister, said on Tuesday.



A migrant camp, mainly home to Afghans, has been spreading along the Canal Saint-Martin in recent months, and has now swelled to some 800 people. Another 1,500 people, mostly Eritreans and Sudanese, have converged under an overpass on the Canal St Denis further to the north. ([Editor's comment: Paris 2024 is in the corner just months away](#))

A collective of aid groups, including Amnesty International, denounced in a [statement](#) what they saw as measures that "risk further eroding the rights of foreigners," such as the rights to asylum and to a fair trial, and may result in "the worsening of the precariousness" of asylum seekers. That insecurity has played out for several days in central Paris, near the Louvre Museum, where dozens of young migrants have set up tents in the freezing cold to demand that they be recognized as unaccompanied minors and be offered asylum.



François Héran, a leading expert on migration who teaches at Collège de France, said France delivered “far too many removal orders,” more than it can enforce, including to migrants who are working and well-integrated.

According to the Senate report, the number of orders issued doubled in the past decade, reaching 122,000 in 2019, the same level as “Greece, Spain, and Italy combined, which face at least comparable migration pressure.”

Mr. Héran added that the law illustrated what he says is France’s refusal to accept that rising immigration is now a global phenomenon affecting all Western countries. “The current debate is totally out of step with the reality,” he said.

In an effort to balance tighter admission rules with better settlement conditions, the government also announced that it planned to create renewable one-year residence permits for undocumented migrants who are already in France and want to work in sectors suffering staffing shortages, such as catering.

“Immigration has always enabled France to respond to the needs of its economy,” Olivier Dussopt, the country’s labor minister, said. But that proposal has come under fire from the center-right Les Républicains opposition party, which holds the key to a potential majority on the bill and with which the government has hoped to build a coalition in Parliament.

“When it comes to immigration, there can be no ‘at the same time,’ ” said Pierre-Henri Dumont, a member of Les Républicains, in a nod to the catchphrase Mr. Macron has long used to signal his bipartisanship. “If you maintain your willingness to regularize illegal immigrants on a massive scale, we will vote against all of your entire future bill.” Lawmakers on the left also voiced sharp criticism of the government’s bill, denouncing what they called a repressive stance that is out of step with growing migration flows around the world because of wars and climate change. In 2018, Mr. Macron’s government passed a law meant to tighten immigration, and which resulted from two pressing realities that remain today: a growing number of asylum seekers and increasing pressure from the far right. Last month, Britain and France signed a [new agreement](#) to stem the growing number of small boats carrying migrants across the English Channel. The deal came nearly a year after [27 people died in a failed attempt to cross the busy waterway](#), one of the deadliest accidents in the channel in modern memory.

War ...



MLRS and artillery shells, cruise and ballistic missiles have been collected and shared to show the scale of the military bombardment Ukraine has suffered. (REUTERS)





Back in service!



Under the ruins of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001, the church of Agios Nikolaos was also leveled. The new church was designed by the architect Santiago Calatrava. We are thrilled to announce the historic reopening of the new St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine, a structure emblematic of Lower Manhattan's storied future and defining past. On December 6, the day of the feast of Agios Nikolaos, the first liturgy took place.

Pseudo-medical experiments in Hitler's concentration camps

By Andrzej Jakubik and Zdzisław Jan Ryn

Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim. 1973: 64–72.

Source: <https://www.mp.pl/auschwitz/journal/english/170062,pseudo-medical-experimentens-in-hitlers-concentration-camps>

“As regards the concepts of moral beauty and justice, such a diversity and inconstancy of opinions prevails that there is even a view that these concepts exist only thanks to convention.”

Aristotle

Andrzej Jakubik, MD, PhD, born 1938, psychiatrist and psychologist, Professor at the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology in Warsaw.

Zdzisław Jan Ryn, MD, PhD, born 1938, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and formerly Head of the Department of Social Pathology at the Collegium Medicum, Jagiellonian University, Kraków. Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the Kraków Medical Academy (1981–1984). Polish Ambassador to Chile and Bolivia (1991–1996) and Argentina (2007–2008). Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Physical Education (AWF) in Kraków. Co-editor of *Przegląd Lekarski – Oświęcim*.





What Is the Reichsbürger Movement Accused of Trying to Overthrow the German Government?

By Claire Burchett

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221208-what-is-the-reichsb-rger-movement-accused-of-trying-to-overthrow-the-german-government>



Dec 08 – Police have arrested 25 people accused of planning to overthrow the German government in a series of raids across the country. The group is accused of trying to instate Heinrich XIII – a descendant of German royalty – as their leader. Among those arrested were members of the Reichsbürger (which translates as citizens of the Reich), a disparate movement of groups and individuals, including some with extreme-right views.

Reichsbürger adherents have been stopped from attempting violent action before, but this latest incident and its alleged members have caused greater concern.

A former member of the German parliament, who was also a judge until shortly after her arrest, was among the group. Birgit Malsack-Winkemann was a parliamentary deputy for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), but left the party in 2021.

Several former soldiers were also arrested in connection with the coup plot. This is a cause for great concern for law enforcement, as such ties give possibly dangerous extremists access to weapons and trained individuals.

Earlier in 2022, Heinrich XIII was reported in the German press as being close to the Reichsbürger scene and a believer of conspiracy theories, prompting his family, the House of Reuss, to publicly distance themselves from him.

He does not, however, have a high profile, apart from a 2019 speech at the WorldWebForum conference in Switzerland, which contained an antisemitic and historical revisionist message. The involvement of an aristocrat speaks to the monarchist motivations of some Reichsbürger, who wish to reinstate a Kaiser as head of state.

What do the Reichsbürger Believe?

The Reichsbürger do not have a centralized structure but are estimated to have at least 21,000 supporters. Their key belief is that the current German state (the Bundesrepublik or Federal Republic), its institutions and democratically elected representatives are not legitimate.

Supporters of the movement refuse to adhere to state authority, such as by paying taxes. They became notorious in the early years of the pandemic for refusing to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.

Some adherents to the movement consider that official German passports and ID cards are illegitimate. While some prefer to use an official certificate of citizenship (called a gelber Schein or yellow certificate), others manufacture their own illegal passports and driver's licenses. These will often include former German states as places of birth, such as the kingdoms of Bavaria or Prussia. In 2021, a German civil servant was removed from office after he applied for a passport with the Kingdom of Bavaria listed as his birth state.





Members of the group generally believe that some previous version of the German state is in fact the legitimate form – though there is some inconsistency as to which.

Some supporters believe Germany's true form existed between 1871 and 1918, when the German Reich was established following unification and before the first world war. Others cite the constitution of the interwar Weimar Republic as that of the true Germany. And others still focus on 1937 to demonstrate what they perceive as the legitimate boundaries of German territory, which then included the former Kingdom of Prussia, now Poland and Russia, but not Austria, which was annexed in 1938.

A uniting belief among the Reichsbürger is that the current German state lacks sovereignty. They think the western allies (France, the UK and US) supposedly retained control after their occupation of West Germany ended in 1955. Therefore, some believe that the current German state is a puppet regime which does not support the interests of the German people.

They sometimes refer to it as Deutschland GmbH (Limited), implying it has no power over itself and exists only to enrich its controllers. The name BRD GmbH is also used, referring to the abbreviated name for post-war West Germany.

Revisionist History and Antisemitism

The focus on historical revisionism and erasure of German sovereignty can encourage a conception of Germany as a blameless country with uncomplicated pride. By focusing on pre-war borders and overlooking post-war history, the Reichsbürger can ignore Germany's defeat in the second world war, as well as its process of coming to terms with its Nazi and colonial past, notably the Holocaust and the 1904 Herero and Nama genocide in Namibia. The removal of these dark moments in German history enables the movement's supporters to focus on their own perceived victimization as subjects of a German state which they do not recognize.

A similar revisionism is common in the wider German far right, notably some members of the populist AfD party. Repudiation of the Holocaust's importance and an emphasis on "positive" moments in German history encourages Holocaust relativisation and antisemitism. However, unlike the AfD, which has adapted its rhetoric to fit into the political mainstream, some Reichsbürger followers entirely disregard current German laws banning Holocaust denial and the dissemination of Nazi propaganda. The group is linked to overt antisemitism and the spread of antisemitic conspiracy theories about the power of "high finance" as well as outright Holocaust denial. In March 2020, German police seized neo-Nazi propaganda during raids on the homes of some Reichsbürger members. However, the historical revisionism can confuse the picture. Although many of its adherents are antisemitic and glorify the colonial past, the Reichsbürger is not specifically defined as a group of right-wing extremists. In truth, only a small portion of the movement can be defined as such.

At its core, right-wing extremism is largely defined as anti-democratic. While many Reichsbürger refuse to endorse the legitimacy of Germany's current democratic state, the lack of unified vision within the movement makes it unclear which system would be preferable, the constitutional monarchy of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the democratic experiment of Weimar Germany or the dictatorship of Nazi Germany. However, in the case of the most recent plot, the key role of Heinrich XIII implies that the goal was the restitution of a constitutional monarchy in the style of Kaiser Wilhelm II's regime.

Growing Threat?

Some Reichsbürger followers are evidently beginning to engage in political violence. The latest arrests follow multiple other incidents. In 2016, a police officer was killed during a raid on a member of the movement's illegal collection of weapons. In August 2020, members of the Reichsbürger attempted to enter the German parliament as part of a protest against COVID-19 restrictions.

The presence of former military figures and a former parliamentarian among the most recently arrested group suggest the Reichsbürger are not without potential influence. The AfD has long denied any links to the movement, but has been shifting further and further to the right in recent years. In 2019, the German interior ministry reported that it had identified some isolated connections between the Reichsbürger and the AfD. The Reichsbürger could be viewed as a fringe group but their ideas clearly appeal to some enough to convince them a coup is a worthwhile undertaking. And links to more influential organizations would make them more dangerous – which is why this matter has been taken so seriously by the authorities.

Claire Burchett is a Ph.D. candidate in European Politics @ King's College London.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: It looks like the nationalism seed resembles anthrax spores that can remain active on the ground for decades!





FIFA World Cup 2022 – Football ethos² I



What To Expect – Rising Trends in Security

Source: <https://i-hls.com/archives/112665>

Dec 07 – According to HID Global, an expert in trusted identity and physical security solutions, these following trends will impact the security and identity industry.

Continuing supply chain issues will require creative solutions. Semiconductor shortages, global logistics bottlenecks, and corresponding cost increases will impact everything from readers and control panels to sensors and detectors.

The focus on sustainability will grow, driving suppliers to increase focus on digital solutions, including end-to-end mobile and multi-application technologies that reduce the industry's environmental footprint.

SaaS-Delivered Identities: As digital-first mandates continue to impact the security landscape, the move to cloud deployments and service models provides opportunities to manage access control for applications, physical assets.

² Ethos, an ancient Greek word describing the set of beliefs, ideas, etc. about the social behavior and relationships of a person or group.





Digital wallet adoption is at an all-time high and enterprises and governments are adding new infrastructure to support digital transactions. Soon, digital IDs will outpace physical ones, and digital servitization will play a vital role as suppliers organize around service models and service-led growth.

Zero trust approach for all is a top trend dominating the security industry, as hybrid work models are becoming the norm. Security leaders tasked with ensuring a safe environment for those returning to the office – and secure identity and access management for those working remotely – are looking to the latest physical access trends and the best practices enabling them. Touchless solutions, data protection, and visitor management technologies are ensuring healthy and secure on-site environments while multi-factor authentication solutions take center stage for remote applications.

Biometrics paired with cloud-based identity management solutions is poised to fuel much faster growth. Security's role in delivering biometric technology that enables secure authentication and protects data privacy is emerging across sectors of the economy.

The combination of IoT, cloud and mobile technologies is steadily driving digital transformation across the security industry. Balancing protection against the potential of new physical and digital cybersecurity threats has moved data science into the spotlight, as discussion turns from risk mitigation and prevention to threat prediction and aversion. Soon, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) become more tightly woven into the fabric of trusted identity solutions, according to securityinfowatch.com.

From chemical warfare to deadly riots, Germany's key role in anti-Iran plots

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

Source: <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2022/12/12/694311/From-Chemical-Warfare-Deadly-Riots-Germany-Role-Iran-Plots->



Dec 12 – German police are busy hunting for operatives of a far-right movement allegedly involved in a "plot to overthrow the government" in Berlin, with dozens of "suspects" already in police custody, facing interrogation and torture.

Holger Münch, head of the German federal police, earlier this week described the "suspects" as a "dangerous mixture of people" with "irrational convictions" possessing "money and weapons", in order to justify the sweeping raids across the country.

Prosecutors in the country say the "plotters" allegedly aimed to topple the government, using "violence and even murder", likening it to crossing the red line.

Quite remarkably, the plot, script and choreography sound strikingly familiar — the influx of money and weapons, use of violence and murder, attempts to foment insecurity and civil war, and of course, the ambitious bid to overthrow the government.





Iran has seen it all for the past three months. The only difference is that the "regime change" plot designed for the Islamic Republic is far bigger in size and scale with protagonists of different hues at work.

And more importantly but unsurprisingly, Berlin has been one of the key plotters.

Since the deadly riots erupted in Iran in mid-September, triggered by the death of a 22-year-old Iranian woman while in police custody, Western states have been hyper-aggressively pushing the "regime change" agenda in the form of hybrid war, making a sheer mockery of international law.

German authorities, in particular, have openly and brazenly instigated rioters in Iran through official and unofficial channels, going to the extent of facilitating a large demonstration in Berlin in late October, which amounted to clear interference in Iran's internal affairs. Interestingly, while they see their own internal security and political survival as "red lines", cracking down on those allegedly involved in a "coup plot", they are not willing to extend the same privilege to Iran, which is up against armed rioters, criminals, terrorists - all of them aided and abetted by Western states.

Good riots, bad protests

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokesman Steffen Hebestreit on Wednesday said "right-wing extremism" poses the "biggest threat" to the country, while expressing concern over what he called a "far-right coup plot".

The statement came hours after dozens of "suspects" were arrested by German security agencies in random raids across the country, including in Berlin, Thuringia, Hesse and Lower Saxony.

On the same day, in Iran, President Ebrahim Raeisi offered to listen to everyone, even those holding "opposite views" while drawing a clear line between riots and protests. He made the remarks at Tehran University on the occasion of National Students' Day.

Raeisi said, as is becoming increasingly clear now, the unrest in Iran is part of the hideous conspiracy to turn the country into another Syria and Afghanistan while pointing the finger toward the US and its allies, which of course includes Germany.

Germany, which scores abysmally low on human rights, has led the crusade against the Islamic Republic in recent months, pushing the European Union to impose further human rights-related sanctions on the country, while also fanning the hybrid war against it.

It was one of the first countries to condemn the execution of an Iranian man who was charged with unleashing a reign of terror on the streets of Tehran, attacking security forces and disturbing public order — of course, swayed by foreign propaganda.

Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian rejected Berlin's criticism as "hypocritical", saying the fight against terrorism, violence and hate speech ought to be an "unequivocal international responsibility".

"It is hypocritical that Germany considers these as red lines for its territory and security, but incites the same sinister phenomenon in Iran and duplicitously denounces our legitimate struggle against them," the top Iranian diplomat wrote on Twitter.

Notably, German authorities have in recent months been severely critical of what they call the "repression of protests" in Iran. The same brand of "protests" they have dubbed a "right-wing coup plot" in their own country. Different yardsticks, of course.

As President Raeisi categorically stated on Wednesday, protests and riots need to be distinguished as two different phenomena. While one enables and facilitates democratic processes, the other derails and destroys them.

What we have witnessed in Iran are not peaceful protests, but rioters armed with assault weapons going berserk across the country, unleashing a reign of terror, killing ordinary citizens, destroying public property, disturbing public order, and paving way for terrorism. A voluntary Basiji member bludgeoned to death on a deserted street, a seminary student smacked fatally with cold weapons, a police officer dragged out of his car and slaughtered in broad daylight, a 10-year-old boy showered with a volley of bullets, the country's flag set ablaze in the middle of a street.

These are the armed hoodlums German chancellor Scholz on November 12 said his country stands "should to shoulder" with, insisting that they are "fighting for freedom and justice".

The same "freedom and justice" Saddam Hussein wanted to bring to Iran with chemical weapons supplied by Germany and other Western states in the 1980s.

Old scars of chemical warfare

At his weekly presser on November 28, on the eve of the day for remembrance of the victims of chemical warfare, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kana'ani appeared with a haunting chemical mask on the desk.

It was a symbolic protest against Germany's supply of chemical weapons to former Iraqi military dictator Saddam Hussein during his 8-year war against Iran in the 1980s, immediately after the Islamic Revolution put an end to years of Western meddling in the country.

"For Iranian civilians and our military forces, this frightening mask brings back memories," Kana'ani said,

recalling the time when he served on the battlefield during the Sacred Defense as a teenage boy.

"Saddam's regime had no barriers in using weaponry and chemical munitions during the war, supported by Western powers, particularly the German government," he hastened to add, pointing to Germany's



direct complicity in the chemical warfare against Iran. The spokesman referred to several UN reports that indicted German companies for providing the former Iraqi dictator with chemical weapons to be used against the people of Iran, which left thousands dead and many others partially or fully disabled for life. Taking the opportunity, Iran renewed calls for Germany to be held accountable for its criminal role in enabling the Iraqi Baathist regime's use of chemical weapons against the people of Iran during the war.

Iran's deputy foreign minister Reza Najafi, speaking at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) conference in the Hague, said the Islamic Republic "neither forgives nor forgets", referring to the chemical onslaught. "As the biggest victim of chemical weapons in contemporary history, Iran neither forgives nor forgets the perpetrators and supporters of Iraq's chemical attacks and these crimes," the diplomat asserted.

Iran has repeatedly over the years raised the issue of Germany's support to the Iraqi regime in perpetuating the horrendous crimes against the people of Iran. In January 2021, Ismail Baqai Hamaneh, Iran's then-representative at the United Nations said the country "will never back down from pursuing Germany's crime of arming Saddam with chemical weapons."

Crimes against humanity

It is worth noting that more than a million people were killed in the course of the war imposed by the Western regimes against the Islamic Republic of Iran through Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime. As stated by independent observers, dozens of countries provided chemical and biological warfare technology and heavy military equipment to Iraq, most notably Germany, but also Britain, France, and the United States. It was the first time that dangerous nerve agents such as sarin and tabun were unleashed on the people of Iran, according to experts, while villages and towns were indiscriminately shelled with sulfur mustard.

In one of the most brutal chemical onslaughts, on June 28, 1987, Iraqi aircraft dropped at least four 250-kilogram mustard bombs on residential areas in Sardasht, a town at the foot of the Zagros Mountains in Iran's West Azerbaijan province.

The scars of chemical weapons can also be traced in the Kurdish border town of Halabja in northeastern Iraq, where more than 5,000 people perished in March 1988 after the Iraqi air force rained down a cocktail of chemical weapons, including mustard gas.

After the 8-year war, Iraq admitted to using 1800 tons of mustard, 600 tons of sarin, and 140 tons of tabun, both against the people of Iran and its own citizens in the Kurdish areas. Tooba Ghazanfari, an immunologist at Shahed University, told Science magazine in March 2018, that three decades later, about 56,000 Iranians continue to cope with health effects from sulfur mustard, ranging from skin lesions and failing corneas to chronic obstructive lung disease and cancer. More than 80 German companies reportedly supplied the Iraqi regime with equipment for its weapons program, as well as technology to produce chemical weapons. By the time the war ended, Germany's assistance had helped Baathist Iraq become the largest producer of poisonous gases in the region. An exhaustive 11,000-page report submitted to the UN in 2002 revealed how German companies "actively encouraged" the Saddam regime in Iraq to develop weapons. It cited Germany's help to Iraq in the development of poisonous gases that contributed to the Halabja massacre in 1988. Despite the avalanche of irrefutable evidence, Germans, or for that matter Americans, British, French, Italians and others were never held accountable for the unexplainable crimes against humanity. As Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi, a leading political commentator and a victim of the chemical warfare, said on a Press TV show last month, Western regimes that provided chemical and biological weapons to Iraq have no credibility to talk about human rights in Iran. "The very same countries that supported the coup in Iran in 1953, that supported Shah when he was gunning down people on the streets with the army, the same people who supported Saddam Hussein during the war and provided him chemical weapons...these are the people talking of human rights," he noted.

Syed Zafar Mehdi is a Tehran-based journalist, political commentator and author. He has reported for over 12 years from India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and Middle East for leading publications worldwide.

Qatar has been subjected to unprecedented criticisms due to World Cup hosting: FM

Source: <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/12/12/2022/qatar-has-been-subjected-to-unprecedented-criticisms-due-to-world-cup-hosting-fm>

Dec 12 – Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani underlined that the State of Qatar has been subjected to unprecedented criticisms due to its organization of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, noting that the attack on the State has started since submitting its bid to host the event in 2010. In an interview with the Washington Post on Monday, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister





of Foreign Affairs said: "The attitude and the behaviour of some media toward Qatar was quite negative and disappointing from our perspective. They were trying to judge Qatar not based on facts, or not based on coming here and fact-checking."

Most inclusive World Cup

His Excellency believed that this is the most inclusive World Cup, noting: "There are a lot of people from different countries, from different backgrounds who have never been able to come and enjoy the World Cup. If you look at the demography of the fans, Indian fans are there, as fans from Pakistan, Southeast Asia, the Far East, the Arab region, Europe, Latin America, from Central Asia. All of them, they are coming here and enjoying the football."

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani pointed to the uniqueness of the Qatar World Cup, saying: "In a very small country, people can go and attend four games in one day. And this made the World Cup affordable for a lot of people who never dreamed about coming to football, let alone attending multiple matches."

"The best reward for us in Qatar is the way the fans have enjoyed this tournament. We are seeing, whether on social media or in some media outlets that are trying to report impartially, most of the visitors are having a very positive experience. I am sure there are maybe some negative observations here or there. But most of them are talking about how hospitable this country is and the people of this country are. How kind they are. And this is something that we are proud of. We want to show to the world that Arab countries, the Middle Eastern region, are not only about wars and conflicts. It's also about celebration and celebration of this beautiful game," His Excellency stressed.

Migrant workers and labour reforms

On the rights of workers and the confusion raised on this file, HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs affirmed: "We never claim that our country is perfect. We never claimed that the conditions of the migrant labourers are perfect. Once these concerns were highlighted, Qatar has acknowledged them and taken them seriously. All the reforms throughout the last 12 years that Qatar took on have been implemented. It's been pictured in a way that Qatar is just ignoring the fact that there is an issue, which is not the case."

His Excellency added that in the past eight years, a group of independent lawyers were brought to examine the labour situation and to identify the gaps and loopholes, whether in the legislation or in the system in the country. "We took the report very seriously. We had 120 recommendations at that time. A lot of these recommendations were to be dealt with at the source countries of the migrant labourers. And part of it was the responsibility of the government of Qatar," His Excellency stressed.

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani noted that Qatar opened its doors to NGOs, and there is no country in the region that adopts an open-door policy, like Qatar did. "Organizations like Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, they can come here, they can publish their reports here. They cannot do it in some other places," he said.

His Excellency emphasized that the State of Qatar sets an example in the field of human rights in the region, and leads change in this area, however, "unfortunately, despite all of this, some NGOs and media outlets were just trying to attack Qatar without acknowledging or appreciating all these developments that happened."

"It's an achievement for a government system to change in 10 years. Europe didn't change in 10 years. The United States didn't change in 10 years. We have accelerated these changes, and we are also thankful for the World Cup that helped us in accelerating these kinds of changes," His Excellency added.

"But critics have been always pointing at the governments and the government's responsibility. They never point at the companies. If there was a situation happening in Europe with migrant labourers being exploited, they would blame the company involved, never the government," he continued.

Regarding migrant worker death tolls, HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the death rates are published every year, based on nationality. "We don't categorise by jobs. But this is the classification that we've been using. And this is a department that's been established only a few years ago. We cannot expect them to have the expertise and publish everything with all the details. And this is a journey that will need time. But our critics don't want to listen to the other side. That's our problem. There is a consistency in just attacking the country," His Excellency said.

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani indicated that Qatar welcomes everybody, saying: "What we've been asking is for the visitors who are visiting us to come here to enjoy the football, focus on the football, enjoy our culture, enjoy the country and the hospitality of the country. Just respect the laws, which is something that is expected of Qatars when they are traveling in other countries. Respect our laws and our traditions."

His Excellency said: "We've been very clear: It's not our business what is the background of the people who are coming. Our business is whatever is affecting public safety or trying by any means to offend the





public. It's not something that's pointed or directed toward one orientation or another. This is applied to everyone." "Whatever is happening on the pitch, this is FIFA rules, not Qatar rules. Whatever is happening outside the pitch is our rules," His Excellency added.

Economic diversification and tourism

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs noted that the State of Qatar has delivered something historic having all these people come and experience the Middle East. "We are 100 per cent certain that it will help a lot in changing the perception of a lot of people around the world about the region. All this infrastructure Qatar had planned back even before the bid, as part of our National Vision 2030. And the World Cup helped in accelerating this to be delivered and to be achieved. It's going to continue to serve this vision for economic diversification and for our tourism sector to continue to flourish," His Excellency said.

At the conclusion of his interview with the Washington Post, HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani underlined that the State of Qatar feels very proud for being able to bring all the Arabs back together, and this is the beauty and the magic of the game itself, how it brings people from different backgrounds, Arabs and non-Arabs, everyone from everywhere, together.

"You can never see this happening in the West, but you see it happen here because there's a common denominator bringing us all together - we believe that all of us belong to each other. What you have seen in Qatar, the way that the people and the fans blended together, it's really something fascinating that I don't think that we have ever seen before. And maybe we will never be able to see it again," His Excellency said.

Brighton University urges staff to not say 'Christmas' because it's too 'Christian-centric' – and instead call it the 'winter closure period'

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11532363/Brighton-University-urges-staff-not-say-Christmas-Christian-centric.html>



Dec 13 – The University of **Brighton** has advised staff to not say '**Christmas**' and instead call it the 'winter closure period'. The word 'Christmas' is too 'Christian-centric', according to a nine-page 'inclusive language guidance' document sent to lecturers at the university.

Staff are also advised not to ask students 'what is your Christian name?' but instead say 'what is your first name?' or 'what is your given name?'

Generalisations about a group of people based on their age, such as saying 'millennial snowflakes' or 'old people cannot use technology', should also be avoided, according to the guidance.

Staff should be 'empowered' to use 'inclusive language confidently and effectively, in order to ensure that both students and staff alike feel safe, valued and respected', the document says.

The University of Brighton, pictured, has asked staff to avoid saying 'Christmas' as it may offend some students – instead asking them to call it the 'winter closure period'

The document reads: 'Language and meaning are powerfully conditioned by the dominant norms of the culture in which they exist.'



'Prevailing attitudes, misconceptions and stereotypes are embedded within modes of communication, and these factors are sometimes reflected – whether consciously or not – in the language that we use when communicating with and referring to others. This means that communication – both oral and written – may be offensive even when this is not our intention.' Andrew Allison, of the Freedom Association, said: 'Universities are supposed to be places where ideas are freely debated. This is Orwellian and ridiculous. Staff and students ought to ignore it and have a good Christmas.'

Tips	What to avoid	Try...
What about “father” and “mother”?	All Jews are... / All Muslims are... / All Christians are... / They are all...	There is no alternative to these kinds of phrases as they all contribute to sweeping stereotypes about people with different faiths. Be specific about the person you are referring to.
Avoid irrelevant religious descriptions.	The Muslim teacher	The teacher
When writing about groups of individuals within the same religious group, avoid homogenising language.	The Muslim Community / The Jewish Community / The Sikh Community / etc	Muslim communities / Jewish communities / Sikh Communities / etc
When referring to countries with a majority religion or faith, use language that recognises that not everyone in that country shares that religion or faith.	A Muslim Country A Christian country	A majority-Muslim country A majority-Christian country
Be aware that the terms 'religion', 'faith' and 'belief' can mean different things to different people and that people may relate to one but not the others. For instance, someone may hold beliefs or faith without belonging to a particular religion.	When referring to a particular individual, avoid making assumptions about their preferences.	Use the language with which individuals identify themselves. If you're unsure, ask them what they would prefer.
Avoid using Christian-centric language	What is your Christian name? Christmas closure period	What is your first name? / What is your given name? Winter closure period

A nine-page document sent to staff at the University of Brighton includes this table which guides them on 'offensive' things not to say to students and provides inclusive alternatives





Donors in Paris pledge over €1B to help Ukraine through the winter

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-winter-one-billion-euros-paris-help/>

Dec 14 – International donors on Tuesday pledged more than €1 billion to ensure Ukraine survives through the winter. All the funds raised from a conference, co-hosted by France and Ukraine, will be geared toward fulfilling Ukraine's most immediate needs. Of the total pledged, €415 million was earmarked for energy, €38 million for food, €25 million for water, €22 million for transport, and €17 million for health care, with another €493 million still to allocate.

Pope Francis on Wednesday (14/12) called on people to spend less on Christmas presents and celebrations, and donate the money saved to those in war-ravaged Ukraine.

An excellent idea! Provided the rich Vatican will give the example by generously donating to Ukraine as well

New protein-based armor material can withstand supersonic impacts

Source: <https://newatlas.com/materials/protein-based-armor-material-withstand-supersonic-impacts/>



Dec 14 – The search for next-generation armor materials has regularly led scientists into the realm of nature, where everything from snail shells to sea sponges have inspired some exciting possibilities. Researchers at the University of Kent have followed in these footsteps to developed a protein-based family of synthetic materials that can withstand supersonic impacts and which they see one day finding use in military and space applications.

Like another interesting advance in material science we looked at back in 2016, the team's creation uses the unique properties of a protein as a starting point. Where that previous example took advantage of a protein's counter-intuitive compression capabilities, the University of Kent team has drilled into the natural shock-absorbing abilities





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of a protein called talin, and used it to create a family of hydrogel materials called TSAMs (Talin Shock Absorbing Materials). “Our work on the protein talin, which is the cells’ natural shock absorber, has shown that this molecule contains a series of binary switch domains which open under tension and refold again once tension drops,” study author Professor Ben Goult explained. “This response to force gives talin its molecular shock absorbing properties, protecting our cells from the effects of large force changes. When we polymerized talin into a TSAM, we found the shock absorbing properties of talin monomers imparted the material with incredible properties.”

In testing, the team’s novel material proved capable of absorbing impacts from projectiles traveling at 1.5 km (0.93 miles) per second, deep in supersonic speed territory which begins at Mach 1 – around 343 m (1,125 ft) per second. The team notes this is much faster than the projectiles you’d expect from a firearm which travel from 0.4 to 1 km (0.24 to 0.62 miles) per second, and faster than most particles whizzing through space, typically in excess of 1 km (0.62 miles) per second.

The shock absorbing abilities were demonstrated against a variety of projectiles, ranging from tiny basalt particles measured in micrometers to bigger chunks of aluminum shrapnel. A useful point of difference compared to traditional body armor materials, according to the team, is that TSAMs preserve these projectiles after the impact. This could make them suitable for the purposes of capturing space debris for the study and development of spacesuits and other protective equipment in the aerospace sector.

The researchers also say these materials have the potential to absorb the kinetic energy from bullets and shrapnel better than current armor materials made of ceramics and fiber-reinforced composites. Integrating the materials into next-generation armor could therefore make them lighter, longer lasting, and offer better protection against blunt trauma.

“We are very excited about the potential translational possibilities of TSAMs to solve real world problems,” said Professor Jen Hiscock. “This is something that we are actively undertaking research into with the support of new collaborators within the defense and aerospace sectors.”

► The research, available as a pre-print and not yet peer-reviewed, can be accessed [here](#).

Holiday Threats: Potential Targets in a Complex Threat Environment

By Bridget Johnson

Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/featured/holiday-threats-potential-targets-in-a-complex-threat-environment/>

Dec 13 – The large gatherings, religious observances, and themed events that make the holidays festive for so many also make Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year’s Eve an attractive target for violent extremists looking to take advantage of opportunistic, symbolic, and often soft targets.

A 2018 ISIS propaganda image depicting Place Kléber, the central square in Strasbourg, France.

The most recent [National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin](#), released by the Department of Homeland Security on Nov. 30, noted that “the holiday season and associated large gatherings” were among the upcoming events that “threat actors could exploit,” with targets of potential violence including “public gatherings, faith-based institutions, the LGBTQI+ community, schools, racial and religious minorities, government facilities and personnel, U.S. critical infrastructure, the media, and perceived ideological opponents.” French media also reported that, with an already high threat environment there, police will be protecting synagogues, churches, and surrounding areas over the holidays.

In the heyday of ISIS propaganda, imagery of terrorists torching Christmas trees, gunning down or running down Santa, bombs in Santa’s toy sack, or blood-spattered holiday decorations were as much a fixture in the run-up to the season as half-price sales and caroling. And what might appear to some to be a hateful yet harmless meme can inspire violent action as intended: Everitt Aaron Jameson, a Modesto, Calif., tow-





truck driver and former Marine, pleaded guilty in 2018 to planning a Christmas-season attack on San Francisco's Pier 39 after he had "liked" on Facebook an ISIS propaganda image depicting Santa with a box of dynamite in New York's Times Square. This year, multiple factors are shaping a rapidly evolving threat environment. Holiday gatherings could be targeted by extremists looking to make a statement with a symbolic strike on individuals of a certain religious or ethnic background, or their primary driver could be simply a tightly packed crowd distracted by revelry. Those seeking a broader attack landscape may be thinking that the holidays could leave critical infrastructure targets with lower staffing or that a hit on this sector during holiday celebrations would make a louder statement in furtherance of their cause. And tactics used in attacks or plots outside of the season could inspire those who have been considering their own attack — the [manifesto](#) of the shooter who attacked an LGBT bar in Slovakia in October said he had "slowly been preparing" since 2019 — to take advantage of the large holiday crowds and soft targets.



December 2017: ISIS extremists last night published a chilling poster of a beheaded Father Christmas - as they threatened to target families over Christmas.

Recent events influencing the threat landscape

Power attack

The season of lights was hit by days of darkness in one North Carolina county after a pair of substation gun attacks Dec. 3 that knocked out power to tens of thousands of residents and businesses. Extremists have praised these attacks and especially lauded the results, urging more lone actors and cells to strike multiple infrastructure systems. Accelerationists view infrastructure attacks as critical to creating the kind of chaos needed for their goal of societal and government collapse.

Attacks on LGBT bars

The deadly attacks on LGBT bars in Bratislava in October and Colorado Springs in November have also drawn extensive praise from extremists who have long targeted the gay community. Juraj Krajcik, the 19-year-old shooter who killed two at the bar in Slovakia, was quickly labeled a "saint" after his attack by





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accelerationists; they bestow the distinction upon white killers who meet certain criteria including deliberate intent, motive, inflicting at least one death, and having a neo-Nazi, white nationalist, or far-right anti-system worldview. These extremists have been pushing for more would-be “saints” to conduct their own attacks.

Antisemitism

The mainstreaming of antisemitic sentiment in recent months has raised alarm among Jewish groups, security officials, and other counterextremists. Extremists who have long expressed desire to exterminate the Jewish people while denying the Holocaust have heralded these recent antisemitic incidents regardless of the messenger. Anti-Jewish hate expressed by figures with public platforms is compounding security concerns that were already escalating in the Jewish community. This week’s administration announcement of the creation a new inter-agency group led by the Domestic Policy Council and the National Security Council to increase and coordinate government efforts to counter antisemitism, Islamophobia, and related forms of bias and discrimination is also likely to stoke extremists.

Letter bombs

Six letter bombs were delivered to high-profile targets in Spain between Nov. 24 and Dec. 1, including one intercepted at the security post of the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, and another wounding an employee at the Ukrainian embassy in Madrid. Incidents can serve as tactical inspiration even if the copycat perpetrator doesn’t share the ideology or motive of the original attacker. When no arrests are made in the case, this can further inspire extremists to act — believing that their own activity can have one or more sequels.

Christmas market threats

Last week, officials in Dusseldorf, Germany, closed down outdoor Christmas markets after police received a threat warning that a truck would be crashed into the market at the historic old town’s city hall. A week before that, Berlin police received a threat from a caller claiming that he was planning a vehicle attack against the Alexanderplatz Christmas market, resulting in temporary road closures around the market. After the Christmas market attacks in Germany in 2016 and France in 2018, authorities don’t consider these idle threats; extremists have also held up these previous attacks and emphasized that Christmas markets hold weight as both symbolic and soft targets.

Buffalo shooter’s guilty plea

Payton Gendron pleaded guilty last month to state charges of committing a domestic act of terrorism motivated by hate, first-degree murder, attempted murder and a weapons possession charge, and is now exploring a guilty plea in federal court where he faces hate crime charges. The white supremacist gunman who killed 10 people in a mass shooting at a Buffalo grocery store in May is heavily lionized on extremist forums through memes, the circulation of his manifesto, and calls for others to follow in his footsteps.

Oath Keepers verdicts

Days after Thanksgiving, Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes and Florida chapter leader Kelly Meggs were convicted of seditious conspiracy and other charges in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The trial just began for four more Oath Keepers charged with seditious conspiracy and other felonies. With the second trial underway and the Jan. 6 anniversary approaching, anti-government extremists could see the next few weeks as timely to conduct violent action.

Holiday threat considerations and potential targets

Houses of worship

Out of at least 121 antisemitic incidents targeting Jewish institutions [reported](#) to ADL since this past June, more than 60 targeted Jewish houses of worship. Attacks on synagogues or churches could come from extremists acting out of religious motivation — such as ISIS or al-Qaeda attacks on institutions they believe to be un-Islamic — along with antisemitic beliefs, like the synagogue shooters in Pittsburgh and Poway. The current extremism climate could also make a house of worship a target if it is seen as not aligning politically or culturally with the attacker(s) or their associated extremist movement. Houses of worship should [information share](#) year-round and implement [extra security measures](#) around holiday events.

Crowded venues

Shopping centers packed with people buying last-minute gifts, music venues, clubs welcoming patrons for events or regular dance nights, New Year’s Eve celebrations, and other crowded venues can be attractive





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to extremists looking to inflict a high number of casualties in a crowded space that may be difficult to flee. Loud music, lots of chatter, and general holiday chaos can also cut down on situational awareness as many in the crowd may be slow to react to a rapidly unfolding violent incident, such as the 2017 attack on New Year's Eve revelers at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul. In addition to screening patrons when applicable, venues should review their security posture taking into account holiday crowds and ensure that personnel are trained to react and coordinate in their specific settings.

Soft targets

Opportunistic strikes during the holiday season can hit targets that may have light or nonexistent security measures, may be familiar places considered safe by the people there, and may contain people with an extra degree of distraction if they're celebrating. Syed Rizwan Farook, for example, picked an especially soft — and familiar — target for his 2015 attack in San Bernardino, Calif., with wife Tashfeen Malik: a training event and Christmas party with his co-workers in a rented conference hall. Any location where people gather should consider its security posture and potential as a soft target; [CISA](#) has resources to help soft targets build relationships and mitigate or deter incidents.

Symbolic targets

Given the nature of the season, a symbolic target could include a faith-based institution or faith leaders as well as an extensive or well-known holiday display or event. A target can be symbolic and overlap with a crowded venue or a soft target, such as crowds waiting to see Santa in a mall or the county employees' Christmas party. But given the recent threat environment, a target may be symbolic to extremists for other reasons — for example, a holiday-themed drag show or story hour that would be targeted by extremists year-round yet is currently wrapped into holiday festivities. Events, faith-based entities, and venues that have a connection to the holiday season should assume a heightened security posture and establish relationships with law enforcement and [information-sharing and analysis centers](#) to keep abreast of the threat environment and mitigations along with any specific threats.

Outdoor events

Holiday parades, community festivals, Christmas markets, New Year's Eve fireworks, and similar outdoor events can be attractive to potential attackers because they draw distracted people who are immersed in the events and attractions into areas that may be difficult to secure. The 2017 Las Vegas mass shooter was able to bypass perimeter security at the outdoor music festival with his sniper's perch at a nearby hotel. The accused gunman in this year's July Fourth parade shooting in Highland Park, Ill., is said to have used a ladder on the side of a business to gain access to the rooftop and, after the attack, used a disguise to blend in with the fleeing crowd. Security officials should review event perimeters as well as nearby vantage points along with the potential for [vehicles](#) or [explosive devices](#) to access the area.

Bridget Johnson is the Managing Editor for Homeland Security Today. A veteran journalist whose news articles and analyses have run in dozens of news outlets across the globe, Bridget first came to Washington to be online editor and a foreign policy writer at The Hill. Previously she was an editorial board member at the Rocky Mountain News and syndicated nation/world news columnist at the Los Angeles Daily News. Bridget is a terrorism analyst and security consultant with a specialty in online open-source extremist propaganda, incitement, recruitment, and training. She hosts and presents in Homeland Security Today law enforcement training webinars studying a range of counterterrorism topics including conspiracy theory extremism, complex coordinated attacks, critical infrastructure attacks, arson terrorism, drone and venue threats, antisemitism and white supremacists, anti-government extremism, and WMD threats. She is a Senior Risk Analyst for Gate 15 and a private investigator.

Cambridge Dictionary's definitions for 'man' and 'woman' now include trans people

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/15/us/cambridge-dictionary-woman-definition-trans-cec/index.html>

Dec 15 – The Cambridge Dictionary recently updated its entries for "man" and "woman" to include transgender people – the latest dictionary to broaden its lexicon to reflect [evolving language](#) around gender.

A spokesperson for the Cambridge Dictionary told CNN that the updates went into effect in October. But the move seemed to go largely unnoticed until this week, when the dictionary's expanded definition of "woman" garnered backlash from conservative commentators on social media and was subsequently covered by right-leaning media outlets. While the Cambridge Dictionary's primary definition for "woman"





remains “an adult female human being,” a second definition refers to “an adult who lives and identifies as female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth.” Similarly, the British reference guide defines “man” as “an adult male human being” and also “an adult who lives and identifies as male though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth.” Example sentences provided by the dictionary include “Mary is a woman who was assigned male at birth” and “Their doctor encouraged them to live as a man for a while before undergoing surgical transition.” “(Our editors) carefully studied usage patterns of the word woman and concluded that this definition is one that learners of English should be aware of to support their understanding of how the language is used,” a Cambridge Dictionary spokesperson said in a statement to CNN. “The first definition at the entry for woman remains unchanged and continues to be ‘an adult female human being’.” The definition of “woman” has become yet another frontier in the culture wars in recent years. Earlier this week, Scotland’s highest court dismissed a legal challenge brought by the group For Women Scotland, who argued that trans women shouldn’t be included in the definition of “women” under a law aimed at improving the gender balance on public boards. In the US, Republican politicians have repeatedly evoked the definition of “woman” in their attacks on transgender people. Earlier this week, Dictionary.com announced “woman” as its 2022 word of the year, citing how “the very matter of the definition of the word ‘woman’ was at the center of so many consequential moments, discussions, and decisions in our society.” Despite the outcry deeming Cambridge Dictionary’s new definitions to be a political statement, the spokesperson said that such changes are meant to provide an accurate depiction of how certain words are used in society. “Our dictionaries are written for learners of English and are designed to help users understand English as it is currently used,” the statement read. “They are compiled by analysing a large corpus of English texts (over 2 billion words in total) taken from all areas of writing and publishing, which allows us to see exactly how language is used. We regularly update our dictionary to reflect changes in how English is used, based on analysis of data from this corpus.”

Other dictionaries have made similar changes to terms around gender and gender identity over the years.

In 2020, Merriam-Webster expanded its definition of “female” to include “having a gender identity that is the opposite of male” – that change also drew criticism from conservatives, though a similar addition was made to the word “male.” The year before, Merriam-Webster added a new definition to the pronoun “they” to refer to a single person whose gender identity is nonbinary.

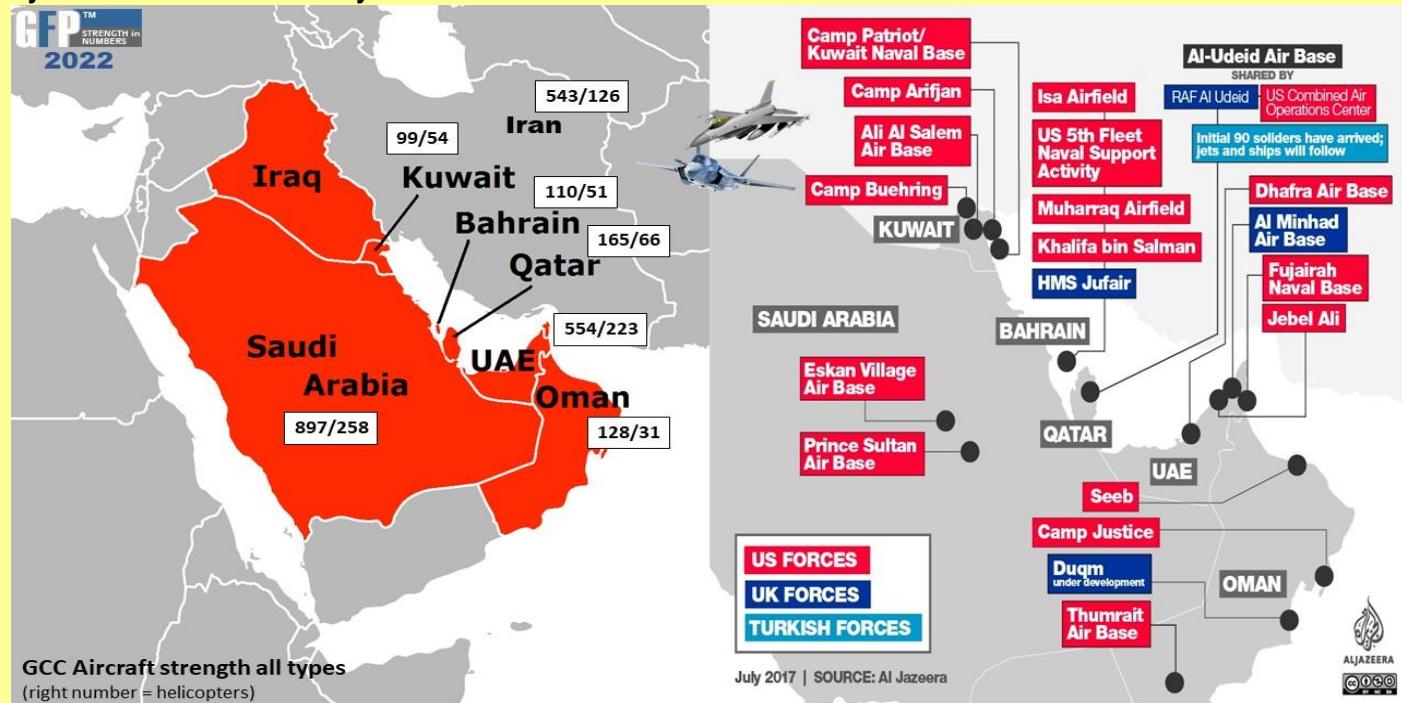
The screenshot shows the Cambridge Dictionary website with the search term 'woman'. The definition is: 'an adult who lives and identifies as female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth'. Below the definition are two example sentences: 'She was the first trans woman elected to a national office.' and 'mary is a woman who was assigned male at birth.'

EDITOR'S COMMENT:

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Will national Air Force save these countries?

By the Editor of “C²BRNE Diary”





Geostrategic depth is very important for the defense of a country. Except for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the remaining GCC countries lack sufficient depth. A sudden massive attack against airports in these countries will neutralize their modern air forces without a battle. Land and naval forces are involved in different types of battle but without air support their destiny is predetermined. One might say that it would be a good idea to move aircraft to KSA bases close to the Red Sea thus increasing the assault distance and giving time to respond plus the benefit of the mighty KSA Air Force. Perhaps the KSA umbrella might injure the “face” of involved countries, but survival is stronger than the face!

FIFA World Cup 2022 – Football ethos II

Outrage as iconic Arab World Cup ‘Messi bisht’ moment marred by Western racism

Source: <https://dohanews.co/outrage-as-iconic-arab-world-cup-messi-bisht-moment-marred-by-western-racism/>



Messi assisted his team in winning their first World Cup since 1986 by tallying two goals and contributing to his team's penalty shootout to defeat France.

Dec 19 – Argentina's Lionel Messi was invited to the stage last night to accept the World Cup trophy, however the superstar's donning of a black Arab cloak triggered racism from Western pundits and journalists.

Messi was draped in the cloak, locally known as *bisht*, by Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. For the Arab hosts of the region's first World Cup, the gifting of the *bisht* was a symbolic a part of Arab culture to honour guests.

The *bisht* is a traditional men's cloak popular in the region and is worn in special ceremonies.

The action received praise on social media in the region and beyond, however it also sparked a new wave of racism from western journalists and Twitter users.

BBC pundit Pablo Zabaleta asked “Just why? There’s no reason to do that.” While BBC host Gary Lineker said it was “a shame they’ve covered his shirt” during what was “a magic moment”. Meanwhile, ESPN journalist Mark Ogden described it as a barber’s “cape” while HITC Sport’s Dylan





Walsh compared the traditional clothing to a “Victoria Secret robe”. Both of those tweets have now been deleted and the journalists issued watered down criticism of the moment.

Explaining the iconic move, Hassan Al Thawadi, secretary general of Qatar's tournament organising committee, told BBC Sport “it is a dress for an official occasion and worn for celebrations”.

“This was a celebration of Messi. The World Cup had the opportunity to showcase to the world our Arab and Muslim culture. This was not about Qatar, it was a regional celebration.

“People from different walks of life were able to come, experience what was happening here and get to understand that we may not see eye to eye on everything, but we can still celebrate together.”

Criticism marred by anti-Arab sentiment

A Twitter [user](#) said in response “Stop thinking that you’re the world and realize that you’re part of a world full of different races, religions cultures and traditions. When Arabs gift their guest a bisht it dignifies him and is a sign of gratitude and isn’t so different from when Pele wore a Mexican hat in 1970.”

“This is a clear example of how some of the Qatar 2022 criticism are just simply marinated in anti-arab sentiment. Messi is wearing an Arabic cultural clothing but Miguel cant stand it. He immediately associates it with regimes. It’s equivalent to wearing the Japanese Kimonos,” wrote one [Twitter user](#) in response to the Miguel Delaney, the Chief Football Writer at The Independent.

Amid the storm of anger and complaints, many social media users expressed the pride and joy they felt seeing the moment.

“Everyone is complaining about how Messi wore the Qatari Bisht. But he doesn’t seem bothered at all. LOOK AT THE CONFIDENCE. The truth is Europeans just can’t fathom the fact that an Arab country just hosted probably the best World Cup from the games to the organization,” [one Twitter user said](#).

[Another user said](#): “I’m probably in the minority here but I thought Lionel Messi wearing a bisht was a nice touch. Bishts are given to Arab warriors after a victory in battle or to royalty...Messi just won the greatest battle of them all and confirmed himself as the king of football.”

Responding to that tweet, one person said: “This is a fitting and respectful gesture for Messi. We could benefit from some nuance in our critique of Qatar and FIFA.”

“For those that don’t know — the black cloak that Messi is wearing is a Bisht—meaning ‘nobility’ or ‘dignity’. It has been worn in the Arab world for thousands of years. It is an honour, and marks him as the legend that he is!” [another tweet added](#).

Sweden Hits Record With 60 Shot Dead in 2022

Source: <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-12-19/sweden-hits-record-with-60-shot-dead-in-2022>

Dec 19 – Sixty people have been shot dead in Sweden this year, a record in modern times, the government said on Monday. Sweden has been hit by an epidemic of shootings in recent years which police and authorities blame on criminal gangs that operate in cities like the capital Stockholm.

“Deadly gun violence has increased and unfortunately has hit a new, bloody record this year,” Justice Minister Gunnar Strommer told reporters.

[Flowers lie outside Malmo Latin School where two women were killed in Malmo, Sweden March 23, 2022. TT News Agency/Johan Nilsson via REUTERS](#)



Strommer said Sweden's sixty shooting deaths this year compared to four in Norway, four in Denmark and two in Finland. The deaths are the tip of an iceberg of violence and organised crime that have put down deep roots in parts of society, Strommer said.

Last year, 45 people were shot dead in Sweden. In 2012, the total was 17, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.

Strommer said the government would now set up a special council within the Justice Ministry to coordinate the fight against gang crime.





"No decent society can accept that someone is shot dead once a week ... on the open street," Strommer said. Sweden has gone from having one of the lowest incidences of gang violence to one of the highest over the last 20 years, according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. The previous, Social Democrat-led government beefed up an under-resourced police force and introduced tougher sentences for gun crimes, among other measures to tackle gang crime. But its failure to reverse the trend was one of the major reasons it lost September's election to a right-wing coalition which promised even tougher measures. The current government has said it wants to set up stop-and-search zones, to double punishments for gang-related crime and to expand authorities' ability to eavesdrop on criminals as part of what Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said was the biggest effort to fight organised crime in modern Swedish history.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: These gangs, are they native Swedish or (legal and illegal) immigrants?

North Korea says Japan 'will soon learn with a shudder' that its military build-up is 'wrong' and 'dangerous'

Source: <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3203922/north-korea-says-japan-will-soon-learn-shudder-its-military-build-wrong-and-dangerous>

Dec 20 – [North Korea](#) on Tuesday condemned Tokyo's planned military build-up outlined in a new security strategy, warning [Japan](#) would soon see the consequences of its "dangerous" decision, while also hinting at a technical advance in its long-range missile system.

The remarks from Pyongyang's foreign ministry came days after Japan last week [unveiled its biggest military build-up](#) since World War Two as regional tension and Russia's Ukraine invasion stoke war fears.

North Korea's foreign ministry said Japan had effectively formalised "the capability for pre-emptive attack" with its new strategy that would bring a fundamental change to East Asia's security environment.



pot calling the kettle black ...

Japan approves largest military build-up in decades citing Chinese security threats

"[North Korea] makes it clear once again that it has the right to take a resolute and decisive military step to defend its national sovereignty, territorial integrity and fundamental interests in the light of the complexity of the regional security environment caused by Japan's action," the official said in a statement carried by Pyongyang's KCNA news agency.

"Japan will soon learn with a shudder it has made a clearly wrong and very dangerous choice."

North Korea has tested an unprecedented number of missiles this year, [including an ICBM](#) designed to reach the US mainland, in defiance of international sanctions.

Several of the North Korean missiles [have flown over Japan](#), or landed in waters near it, drawing condemnation from the staunch US ally.

Tuesday's statement from Pyongyang criticised the [United States](#) for "conniving and instigating Japan's rearmament and reinvasion scheme" saying Washington had no right to question North Korea's defences.

Tokyo's sweeping, five-year plan, once unthinkable in pacifist Japan, will make the country the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and [China](#), based on current budgets.





In a separate statement, Kim Yo-jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader [Kim Jong-un](#), hinted at a technological advance in its ICBM system, and denounced questions over what Pyongyang said was its bid [to develop a spy satellite](#).

North Korea fired two medium-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Sunday in what it called an “important” test for the development of a reconnaissance satellite that it hopes to complete by April.

With our right to survival and development being threatened, why are we afraid of sanctions ... and why would we stop?
Kim Yo-jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un

Experts have raised doubts over the level of North Korea’s satellite technology but Kim Yo-jong derided the questions and suggested that North Korea’s technical abilities included new ICBM developments.

North Korea has test-fired its ICBMs at a steep angle and analysts say a normal launch angle requires more sophisticated technology to resist heat generated during re-entry into the atmosphere.

“I can clear up their doubt about it,” Kim Yo-jong said. “They will immediately recognise it in case we launch an ICBM in the way of a real angle firing straight off.”

[South Korea](#) would “cry out for some kind of international cooperation and try hard to impose additional sanctions on us,” she said in the separate KCNA dispatch.

“But with our right to survival and development being threatened, why are we afraid of sanctions ... and why would we stop?”

EDITOR'S COMMENT: In Greece, we say, “shouts the thief to frighten the householder”! For how long the world will forbear a sociopath and his disturbed brain?

Afghanistan: Taliban bans women from universities amid condemnation

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-64045497>

Dec 21 – The Taliban has banned women from universities in Afghanistan, sparking international condemnation and despair among young people in the country. The higher education minister made the announcement on Tuesday, saying it would take immediate effect. The ban further restricts women's education - girls have already been excluded from secondary schools since the Taliban returned last year.

In Kabul, female students have told the BBC about their anguish.

"They destroyed the only bridge that could connect me with my future," one Kabul University student said.

"How can I react? I believed that I could study and change my future or bring the light to my life but they destroyed it."

The US on Tuesday roundly condemned the Taliban's actions "in the strongest terms" and said such a move "will come with consequences for the Taliban". "The Taliban cannot expect to be a legitimate member of the international community until they respect the rights of all in Afghanistan," said Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement.

"No country can thrive when half of its population is held back." Western countries have demanded all year that the Taliban improve female education if they wish to be formally recognised as Afghanistan's government. The United Nations also said it was "deeply concerned". "Education is a fundamental human right. A door closed to women's education is a door closed to the future of Afghanistan," said Ramiz Alakbarov, UN chief's deputy special representative for Afghanistan. The Taliban's leader Hibatullah Akhundzada and his inner circle have been against modern education - particularly for girls and women. The Taliban had promised a softer rule after seizing power last year following the US' withdrawal from the country. However, the hardline Islamists have continued to roll back women's rights and freedoms in the country. The ban on tertiary education follows rules set last month, where [women were banned from parks, gyms and public baths](#) in the capital.



Tightening rules

Just three months ago, the Taliban had allowed thousands of girls and women to sit university entrance exams in most provinces across the country. But [there were sweeping restrictions on the subjects they](#)





could apply for, with engineering, economics, veterinary science and agriculture blocked and journalism severely restricted.

Under Taliban rule, universities had already been operating under discriminatory rules for women - with gender-segregated entrances to campuses and separate classrooms.

Female students could only be taught by women professors or old men.

One woman told the BBC about how there were "too many difficulties" just trying to continue her education after the Taliban takeover. She said: "We fought with our brothers, with our fathers, with society and even with the government.

"We went through a hard situation just to be able to continue our education.

"At that time at least I was happy that I could graduate from university and achieve my dreams. But, now how can I convince myself?" Afghanistan's economy has been largely dependent on foreign aid in recent decades, but aid agencies have partly - and in some cases fully - withdrawn support to the education sector after the Taliban refused to allow girls into secondary schools.

There was an exodus of trained academics after the withdrawal of US-led forces, and this year many teaching staff have gone unpaid for months. In March, the Taliban had promised to re-open some high schools for girls but then cancelled the move on the day they were due to return - citing funding and syllabus issues which rights groups said were excuses.

Issue splits Taliban

Analysis by Yogita Limaye, BBC South Asia correspondent

There has been speculation for over a month now that the Taliban government would ban university education for women. One female student predicted it a few weeks ago. "One day we will wake up and they will say girls are banned from universities," she had said. And so, while many Afghans might have expected that sooner or later this decision would be taken, it still comes as a shock. Last month women were barred from parks, gyms and swimming pools. In March this year, the Taliban government did not deliver on its commitment to open secondary schools for girls. From conversations with Taliban leaders over the past year, it is evident that there is disagreement within the Taliban on the issue of girls' education. Off the record, some Taliban members have repeatedly said they are hopeful and working to try and ensure girls get an education. Girls were allowed to sit for graduation exams for secondary schools two weeks ago, in 31 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, even though they haven't been allowed to be in school for more than a year. That provided a glimmer of hope, which has now been extinguished.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Two countries insult humanity – North Korea and Afghanistan! By the way, all these macho Taliban with the big guns what do they do for a living? What is their contribution to society? Same question for other mighty males in other parts of the world that spend their days doing nothing or demonstrating or being involved in riots.

Fact Check: Did U.S. Invade Iraq to Access 'Ancient Stargate'?

By Robyn White

Source: <https://www.newsweek.com/us-invade-iraq-ancient-stargate-1766705>

Dec 19 – It has been nearly two decades since the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003. But theories into the U.S' rationale behind the invasion continue to spread.

Since the invasion, many hypotheses have been floated, from the official line about preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to others by the war's critics that involve oil and geopolitical interests.

The complexity behind the rationale for the U.S. military operation has also triggered a variety of conspiracy theories.

The Claim

One such conspiracy theory has resurfaced recently on a Reddit post. The post, located in the conspiracy community on the platform, shows a picture of Iraq's historical landmark, the Great Ziggurat of Ur.

"This is the real reason we invaded Iraq. Ancient alien Stargate portal located in the Great Ziggurat of Ur in Iraq," Reddit user PalatableMahogany said in a caption.

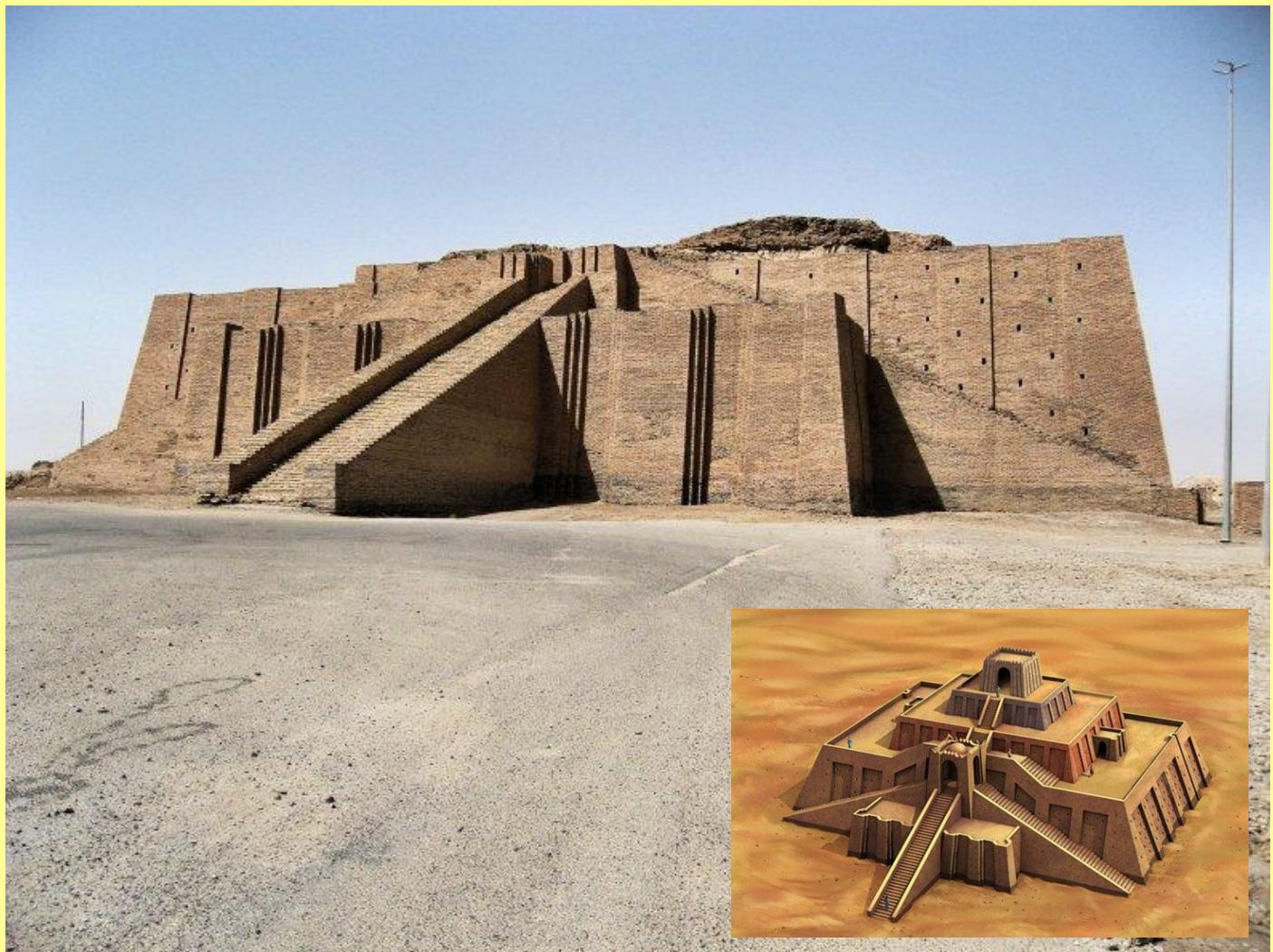
"Wow, I never bothered to look it up. But yes, this makes sense. Get 2 birds stoned at once," one Reddit user said.

Others were not so sure the theory made sense.

"Pics of the Stargate or it didn't happen," another Reddit user said.

Another Reddit user said: "And all that time I thought it was oil and gold...But, yeah, the Stargate. Makes sense."





A stock photo shows the Great Ziggurat of Ur - a historical landmark that conspiracy theorists believe holds an ancient alien stargate
Simon11uk/Getty

The Facts

The Great Ziggurat of Ur is an ancient structure that used to be at the center of Mesopotamia, a historical region in western Asia. The Ziggurat was originally built during the Early Bronze Age and reconstructed in the 6th century.

Today, it stands remarkably well preserved, in a remote pit of desert in Iraq's Dhi Qar Province, according to the [Madain Project](#), an online archive of Abrahamic History and Archaeology.

Often dubbed "[Iraq's answer to the pyramids](#)," the structure (and others like it) typically had several terraced levels as opposed to the pyramids' flat walls, but didn't have interior chambers.

It originally stood between 70 and 100 feet high, according to the art history resource, [Smarthistory](#).

Mesopotamia used to be home to the Sumerians, which was one of the first civilizations to exist, dating back to 3,000 BC. The civilization worshiped a group of deities called Anunnaki, according to The Oxford Companion to World Mythology written by David Leemings.



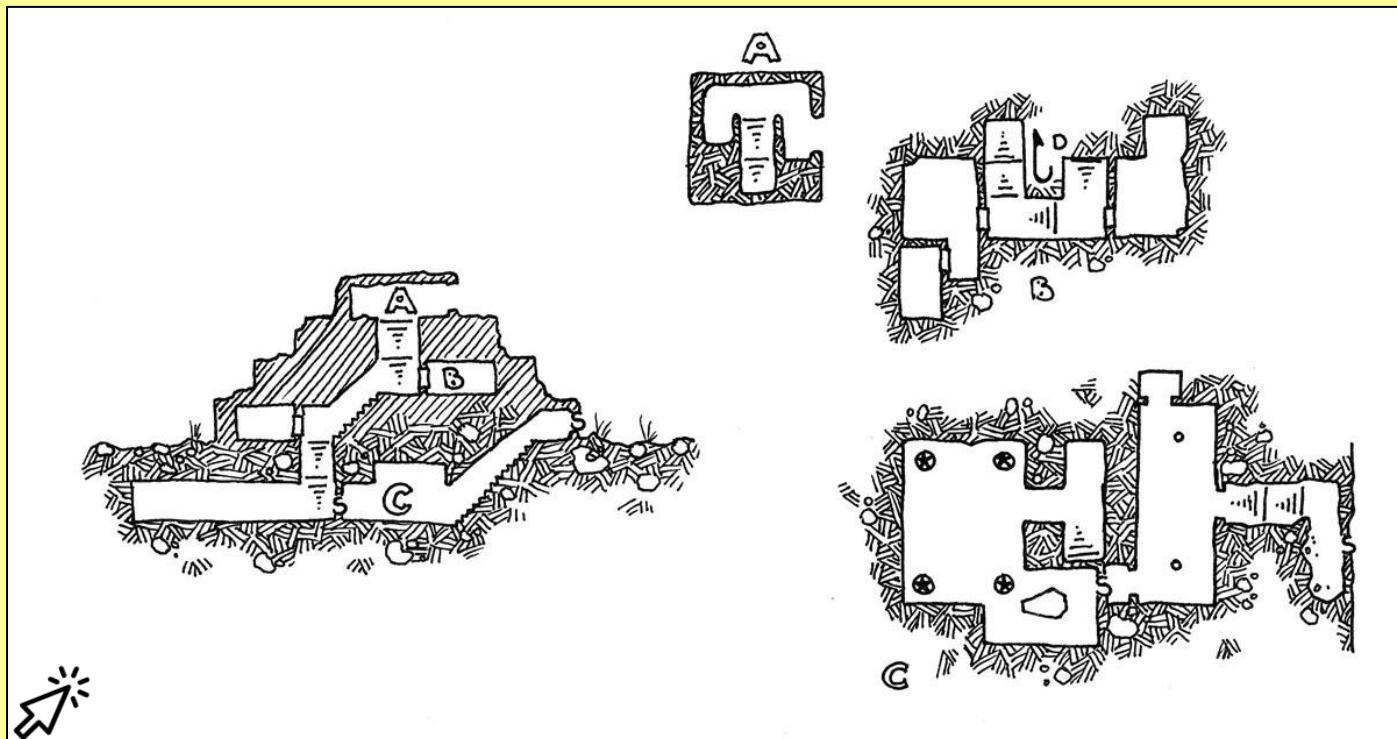


This may be the nugget of truth in the "stargate" narrative, with conspiracy theorists believing that the Anunnaki were actually extraterrestrials that gifted 'Stargate' portals to the people living at the time, a [2017 VICE article reported](#).

Stargate portals are hypothetical devices, often depicted in science fiction, that allow for rapid travel from one distant location to the other, and social media users purported that one of these stargates is located in the Great Ziggurat of Ur.

However, there is no scientific evidence to back up the claim that an alien stargate is located in the Great Ziggurat of Ur, built around 2100 B.C.E. by the king Ur-Nammu of the Third Dynasty of Ur, less so that it was a factor in the U.S.' invasion of Iraq.

The location was initially used by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's forces as a military facility, the Tallil Air Base, which was largely destroyed by the American forces in 1991, according to [U.S. military records](#). Then, in 2003, the U.S. retook it, and the Pentagon closed public access to the land adjacent to the structure, after building a new airfield and military base there, as Fox News [reported](#) in 2009.



While the move did restrict public access to the area, as the Fox News and other reports at the time noted, it [remained open to U.S. military personnel](#) stationed in the area, turning the location into something of a [tourist hot spot](#) for American troops.

This was a source of much frustration for Iraqi citizens, who were not allowed to enter the holy site, especially amid [reports](#), including by the *Guardian*, citing local aid workers, about cases of vandalism targeting the ancient structure. These incidents, the report noted, resulted in the Ziggurat being briefly declared off limits to U.S. troops as well.

The Pentagon eventually handed control over the archaeological landmark back to the Iraqi government in May 2009, according to the U.S. military [records](#), removing its location outside the official bounds of the base.

The air base itself was held by U.S. forces, as well as variably by Australian and Romanian troops, until America's full [withdrawal](#) in December 2011, at which point the Pentagon handed control of it back to Iraq, as part of the New Dawn [operation](#).

As for the much more complex and [controversial](#) wider topic—the rationale behind the Iraq war—many [reasons](#) have been floated. But the general consensus, as [stated](#) by the Council on Foreign Relations and [historians](#), remains that the main, if not isolated reason, was to end the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The U.S. [justified](#) the invasion by claiming that Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction and thus posing a major security threat. But while Iraq possessed such weapons during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988, [they no longer did in 2003 at the time of the war](#). What we know for sure is that the U.S has always had "long-standing geopolitical interests in the Greater Middle East," Jason Opal, Professor of History at McGill University told *Newsweek*.

"Some of which they inherited from prior imperial powers such as Britain and France," Opal said.





"These interests are mostly, although not entirely about access to oil—not just in terms of securing that oil for US consumers and corporations, but also in denying that same oil from enemy nations, such as Russia and China.

"Especially after his invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein—formerly a US ally against Iran—became a major threat to these interests, and his general brutality and unpredictability made him unacceptable to many US leaders."

Until 2001, the U.S. resolved to contain and isolate Hussein, but the events of 9/11 gave President [George W. Bush](#) a pretext to "replace him with force," Opal said.

"The evidence indicates that the Bush administration severely stressed the evidence of Hussein's terrorist ties and nuclear program, selling the war to the US public on exaggerated claims if not outright lies," Opal said.

"But there is absolutely no reason to imagine any other hidden motives. Their purpose was to destroy Hussein's regime, implant a US-friendly government, and promote US (and, by extension, Israeli) dominance over the region. Period, full stop.

"There are plenty of reasons to be skeptical about the Bush administration's stated and actual reasons for launching that war. But there are also plenty of ways to explain the underlying reasons without falling into fact-free conspiracy theory."

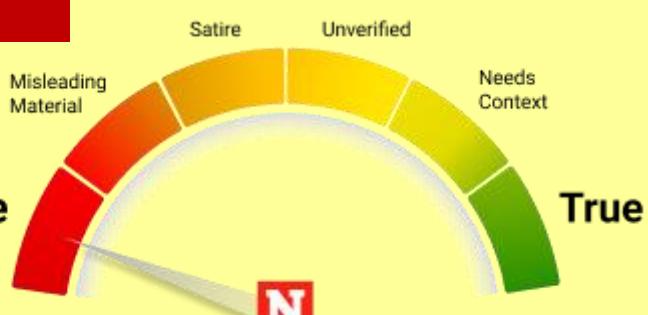
The Ruling

While the concrete reason for the Iraq war remains a subject of debate, the claim that an alien stargate triggered the invasion is false on multiple levels.

Several genuine factors, including geopolitical and economic ones, form the basis of historians' consensus on the Bush administration's motives.

The Ziggurat of Ur is an ancient structure, among several ziggurats still standing, that was built by ancient Mesopotamians and has since been reconstructed twice, in antiquity and again in the 1980s, but there is no scientific basis for claims that it is, or plays host to, an alien stargate.

While it was indeed under U.S. control for some time (due to its location adjacent to an existing air base taken over by the Americans), it was handed back to the Iraqi government shortly before the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country.



Ten Most Significant World Events in 2022

By James M. Lindsay

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221220-ten-most-significant-world-events-in-2022>

Dec 20 – Future historians may come to regard 2022 as a hinge in history, marking the end of one era and the beginning of another. Major war returned to Europe, with the attendant threats of nuclear strikes, and the door closed firmly shut on the U.S. policy of [strategic engagement](#) with China. Yes, the past twelve months did bring some good news. Most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic eased in many countries. But overall, 2022 brought more bad news than good news. So here are my top ten world events in 2022. (My colleagues in CFR Digital have created [a video](#) that recounts the top seven.) You may want to read what follows closely. Many of these stories will continue into 2023 and beyond.

10. Turmoil Rocks British Politics. It is never good when a prime minister's tenure is measured in "[Scaramuccis](#)." But that was the United Kingdom's situation in 2022. The country whose empire once spanned the globe had three prime ministers in just two months and also lost the world's longest reigning monarch. The proximate cause for the turmoil at 10 Downing Street was more than fifty members of Boris Johnson's government resigning in July to protest the seemingly endless [parade of scandals](#) on his watch. He [agreed to resign](#), and was succeeded by Liz Truss. She lasted just forty-five days—or [4.1 Scaramuccis](#)—the shortest tenure of any British prime minister in history. (Truss also holds the distinction of being the last prime minister that Queen Elizabeth II asked to form a government.) Truss won the job in an internal Conservative Party election in which [just 0.3 percent](#) of registered British voters were eligible to vote. She sealed her doom by [immediately slashing taxes](#). The move sent the value of the [British pound plummeting](#). Rishi Sunak, who helped engineer Johnson's downfall, got the honor of trying to pick up the pieces as Britain's first prime minister of color. He faces daunting headwinds. Britain looks to be in a recession with inflation running at 15 percent, partly because of skyrocketing energy prices in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.





The bigger problem, and the broader cause for Britain's turmoil, is that Brexit has not produced the [economic bonanza](#) that proponents promised. "Remainers" can say, "I told you so," but a return to the European Union [isn't in the cards](#).

9. A Trio of Crises Buffet Pakistan. Political, economic, and climate crises wracked Pakistan in 2022. In April, Prime Minister Imran Khan [lost a no-confidence vote](#) in parliament, continuing a streak in which no Pakistani prime minister has ever completed a full five-year term. Khan, however, did not go quietly into retirement. He instead led his followers in a series of protest marches on the capital of Islamabad seeking to oust his successor, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Seemingly in retaliation, the government [charged Khan](#) in August with violating Pakistan's antiterrorism laws. In November, he [was wounded](#) in a failed assassination attempt. He [blamed](#) Sharif and senior military officials for the attacks and demanded that the country hold early elections. As Khan's followers were marching, Pakistani officials were struggling to solve the country's [debt crisis](#) as the foreign exchange reserves needed to finance its debt and to pay for imports ran perilously low. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) [approved a bailout package](#) in August that prevented an immediate economic collapse. However, Pakistan owes roughly [\\$30 billion to China alone](#), equivalent to 30 percent of Pakistan's GDP, and has to pay back roughly \$2 billion in foreign loans overall in 2023. The steps needed to secure the IMF's help are likely to [slow economic growth](#) even as inflation spikes. In August, torrential monsoon rains and melting glaciers triggered [epic floods](#) that compounded Pakistan's political and economic woes. One-third of the country was flooded, and more than one million homes were destroyed. Pakistan's triple crises make it likely that its 225 million citizens will face a difficult 2023.

8. Humanitarian Crises Deepen. Russia's invasion of Ukraine focused attention on Ukrainians fleeing their homeland for security abroad. That coverage helped obscure humanitarian and refugee crises elsewhere in the world. Some [32 million people](#) around the world currently are refugees, meaning they have fled their native country because of persecution, conflict, or violence. When the internally displaced—that is, people who have been forced from their homes but continue to live in their native country—are included, the number balloons to more than 100 million. That is 13 million higher than the end of 2021, or equivalent to the combined populations of Ireland, Lithuania, and New Zealand. The surge in refugees and internally displaced people is only in part due to the war in Ukraine. The [humanitarian situation](#) in countries like Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Yemen remains desperate without any signs of a resolution in the underlying conflicts. Syria alone accounts for a fifth of the world's refugees. A surge in gang violence in Haiti prompted thousands of Haitians to [flee overseas](#) and sparked [talk of a foreign intervention](#) to restore order. One possible bright spot heading into 2023 is Ethiopia. In early November, the Ethiopian government and Tigrayan leaders [signed a peace deal](#) that ended a two-year long civil war that [has displaced](#) more than 5.1 million people. But international relief agencies and private humanitarian organizations [worried](#) that the Western efforts to help Ukraine were crowding out funding for humanitarian crises elsewhere.

7. Latin America Moves Left. What a difference five years can make. In 2017, right-of-center politicians dominated politics in Latin America. But starting in 2018 with the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, the winds shifted. Center-left candidate Alberto Fernández claimed Argentina's presidency in 2019. Socialist Luis Arce won Bolivia's presidency in 2020. Last year, socialist Pedro Castillo became president of Peru and leftist Gabriel Boric became president of Chile. The trend to the left continued in 2022 as democratic socialist Xiomara Castro was sworn in as president of Honduras, former rebel fighter Gustavo Petro made history by becoming Colombia's first leftist president, and former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva returned to the presidency by defeating the incumbent right-wing firebrand Jair Bolsonaro. A regional shift to the left has precedent in Latin America. In the late 1990s and early 2000s politicians like Hugo Chavez, Lula, and Evo Morales won election and spurred talk of a "[pink tide](#)." Whether the recent trend constitutes a second pink tide [can be debated](#). What is undeniable is that these leaders will be [hard pressed](#) to deliver on their promises to tackle the many economic, gender, and racial inequities besetting their countries. They all face a slowdown in global economic growth, rising interest rates, increased inflation, and the continued consequences of COVID. At the same time, political polarization [has deepened](#) across the region. Events have already claimed one leader. Just this month, the Peruvian Congress [impeached](#) President Castillo after he tried to invoke emergency rule.

6. Iranians Protest. Regimes born out of protests can also be toppled by them. That reality must haunt the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who in 2022 saw the most significant challenge to their rule since they came to power in 1979. The protests began in September when "morality police" in Tehran [arrested](#) Mahsa Amini, a twenty-two-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman visiting Iran's capital city, for failing to cover her hair properly. She [died](#) in police custody. When the news reached her hometown of Saqqez in northwestern Iran, hundreds of people [gathered](#) to condemn her death and Iran's mistreatment of women. The protests quickly spread throughout the country





as Iranians across social, class, and ethnic lines marched to the slogan: "Women, life, freedom!" Iranian leaders [blamed](#) the United States and Israel for engineering the protests, though the driving force was the government's political repression, corruption, and mismanagement of the economy. The government tried to quell the protests with force. By December, Iranian security forces had killed as many as [450 protestors](#) on the streets, and the government had begun [publicly executing protestors](#) convicted in rushed trials for crimes against the state. The persistence of the protests in the face of government repression prompted [speculation](#) that Iran is in the early stages of a new revolution. Perhaps. But so far, the regime has shown no signs of splintering, and no one has emerged to lead the opposition. Should that change, Iran's theocratic regime could be headed for the ash heap of history.

5. COVID Eases. Pandemics eventually end. Three years after COVID burst onto the scene, the world appears to have turned the corner on the first global pandemic in a century. In September, the head of the World Health Organization [declared](#) that the end of the pandemic is "in sight." That reality was evident in the fact that many countries abandoned the [lockdowns](#), [travel restrictions](#), and related measures that they had imposed when COVID swept across the world in early 2020. They were able to do so because of the success of vaccines and therapeutic treatments in lowering the chances of dying from COVID and because many of their citizens had already been infected and developed some protection against the virus. The one exception to this trend was China. It pursued a zero-tolerance policy long after every other country had abandoned the strategy, preferring instead to impose draconian crackdowns whenever and wherever outbreaks occurred. By late 2022, the Chinese people had begun [to rebel](#) against what Chinese officials had hailed as their great success. In December, Beijing [began easing](#) its COVID restrictions. However, it had not developed its own highly effective vaccine, refused to import highly effective Western vaccines, and had a population with relatively little exposure to COVID. So the death toll in China from COVID will soar in 2023. Even if China avoids the death tolls that the United States and other countries experienced in 2020, COVID will remain a deadly disease there and elsewhere for years. At the end of 2022, more than 2,000 Americans [were dying](#) of COVID each week.

4. Inflation Returns. Sometimes the good old days were not so good. The late 1970s are a case in point. Anyone who lived through those years experienced what it was like to see inflation eat through their paychecks. The inflationary spiral was broken only after the U.S. Federal Reserve raised interest rates and triggered a brutal recession. In the four decades since then the world has lived in a low inflation environment. Indeed, for a time the bigger worry for economists was that inflation rates had [fallen too low](#) and might trigger a [disastrous deflationary spiral](#). That peril was avoided, but 2022 saw inflation rise [around the world](#). The price spikes were driven by a combination of demand and supply issues. On the demand side, years of easy government monetary policy combined with a flood of government spending to prevent an economic collapse during the COVID pandemic put [more money](#) in consumers' pockets. On the supply side, [first COVID](#) and then [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#) disrupted global supply chains, creating scarcities in a wide array of goods. Spiking prices have roiled politics in rich and poor countries alike as leaders scrambled to address growing public anger. The problem is that the main cure for inflation is raising interest rates. Doing that, however, does little to solve supply chain disruptions, and it could trigger a recession. The U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks hope to engineer a "[soft landing](#)." Even if they succeed, higher interest rates are already [creating a debt crisis](#) for many poor countries.

3. Climate Change Intensifies. Forty years ago, when scientists first warned of a possible climate catastrophe, it was a problem for the future. Two thousand twenty-two showed that that perilous future [has arrived](#). Once rare extreme weather events [became commonplace](#). Europe experienced [record heat waves](#) that burned forests and dried up rivers. Pakistan endured a similarly brutal heat wave that was followed by epic monsoons that left as much as one-third of the country under water. The U.S. southwest endured a record drought that shrank reservoirs like Lake Mead and [diminished crops yields](#). On the other side of the country, Hurricane Ian wreaked havoc on Florida. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations [warned](#) in April that the effects of climate change will soon become irreversible. There were a few bright spots in the climate change debate. In August, the U.S. Congress passed, and President Joe Biden signed into law, the Inflation Reduction Act, which has been heralded as the most [important step taken thus far](#) to reduce the emission of the heat-trapping gases that cause climate change. Likewise, scientists generated [technological advances](#) that might someday wean humanity off fossil fuels. But overall, government action continued to lag. The COP27 meeting at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, ended with a [loss and damage agreement](#) that in theory will lead wealthy countries to compensate poor countries harmed by climate change. But no breakthroughs were made in cutting emissions. Instead, the share of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere [continued to rise in 2022](#).

2. U.S.-China Tensions Grow. The great power competition between China and the United States is fully underway. The Joe Biden administration's *National Security Strategy*, released in October 2022, [made the point](#) bluntly: "China harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order





in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit,” and the United States intends to “win the competition.” The administration pointed to Beijing’s militarization of the South China Sea, its support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, its efforts to intimidate Taiwan, and its rampant theft of intellectual property as evidence that Beijing’s behavior had forced the United States to abandon its policy of welcoming China’s rise. China’s belligerent response to U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in August highlighted just how tense relations had grown between the two countries. In October, Biden took a major step to limit China’s rise by denying it access to the advanced semiconductor chips and technology essential to dominating fields like artificial intelligence. Biden also continued to urge friends and allies to take similarly tough stances on China. However, the administration’s tendency to act unilaterally, its lackluster trade initiatives, and its embrace of an industrial policy that could steal jobs from those same friends and allies, undercut its efforts. In mid-November, Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit. They promised to work to reduce mutual tensions and pledged cooperation in areas like climate change and public health. Nonetheless, mutual suspicion and acrimony are likely to dominate the relationship for years to come.

1. Russia Invades Ukraine. Sometimes intelligence agencies are like the mythical Cassandra, correctly predicting events only to be disbelieved. Late in 2021, U.S. and British officials began warning that Russia would invade Ukraine. Many European leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, dismissed the idea of war. But on February 24, 2022, Russia launched a “special military operation” that it said was needed to force the “demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine.” To the surprise of the Kremlin and most military experts, Ukraine withstood the initial onslaught and then began to turn back Russian forces. Moscow abandoned its bid to take Kyiv and shifted to seizing the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. In September, the Ukrainians launched a counteroffensive that liberated the northeastern city of Kharkiv. Six weeks later, Russian forces abandoned the southeastern city of Kherson, spurring speculation that Ukraine might seek to reclaim Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014. Russia’s invasion exposed significant geopolitical divisions. Western nations rallied behind Kyiv. China and most countries in the Global South did not, despite their insistence that national borders are sacrosanct. Some even blamed the invasion on NATO expansion. They failed to explain, though, how an alliance that mustered less firepower on the ground than it did thirty years earlier and that one member leader said was experiencing “brain death,” suddenly threatened Russia. As 2022 ended, a ceasefire looked unlikely. Russia targeted Ukraine’s critical infrastructure, hoping that winter would do what the Russian military couldn’t, break Ukraine’s will. Meanwhile, the rest of the world struggled to adapt to the price shocks, supply disruptions, and food shortages triggered by Russia’s brazen aggression.

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Stabilization Lessons from the British Empire

By Roger B. Myerson

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Source: <https://tnsr.org/2022/11/stabilization-lessons-from-the-british-empire/>



Failures of costly state-building missions in places like South Vietnam and Afghanistan have created a widespread belief that foreign interventions cannot stabilize fragile states. However, a review of the operational principles of British colonialism may offer some valuable lessons for how to successfully conduct state-building interventions. Before 1939, foreign interventions were regularly managed by a decentralized team of plenipotentiary agents who specialized in fostering local political development. Since 1945, however, international development assistance has generally worked with and through a recognized national government, implicitly supporting a centralization of power. The basic organizational principles of the British colonial district officers — who operated with decentralized political engagement — could be effectively applied in an international state-building agency for promoting accountable government in failed states that export violence and suffering. These principles are reviewed here, not to condone colonialism’s evils, but in order to understand how it was able to establish stable political order in so many different parts of the world.

- Read the full article at the source’s URL.

Roger Myerson is the David L. Pearson Distinguished Service Professor of Global Conflict Studies in the Harris School of Public Policy and the Griffin Department of Economics at the University of Chicago. He is the author of Game Theory: Analysis of Conflict (1991) and has applied game-theoretic analysis to the





study of political systems. He has written extensively about moral hazard and leadership in the foundations of the state and about the vital role of local politics in democratic state-building. In 2007, he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his fundamental contributions to mechanism design theory, which analyzes rules for coordinating economic agents efficiently when they have different information and difficulty trusting each other.

UK warns of Iranian and Russian threats to Middle East security

Source: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iran/2022/11/18/uk-warns-of-iranian-and-russian-threats-to-middle-east-security/>

Nov 19 – Britain believes [Iran](#) and [Russia](#)'s activities pose a threat to the security of the Middle East, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly told a regional security forum in Bahrain on Saturday.

Tehran has acknowledged that it supplied Moscow with drones but said they were sent before [the war in Ukraine](#) started in February. The US said [Russia has used drones](#) from Iran to attack cities and energy infrastructure in Ukraine.

Iran has also been accused of various [attacks on shipping](#) and of [supplying arms](#) to militias including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

"Iranian-supplied weapons threaten the entire region. Today Iran's nuclear programme is more advanced than ever before, and the regime has resorted to selling Russia the armed drones that are killing civilians in Ukraine," Mr Cleverly said at the annual International Institute of Strategic Studies Manama Dialogue.

The forum in Bahrain's capital is organised by the IISS, a think tank in London.

"As their people demonstrate against decades of oppression, Iran's rulers are spreading bloodshed and destruction as far away as Kyiv," Mr Cleverly said.

He said the UK would work with partners in the region to ensure Tehran never developed a nuclear weapon and to highlight the effects Russia's invasion of Ukraine had food security across the region.

"Britain is determined to work alongside our friends to counter the Iranian threat, interdict the smuggling of conventional arms and prevent the regime from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability," he said.

Iranian military entities and industries are already under heavy US sanctions over Tehran's nuclear programme.

This week, Iran's mission to the UN said the country was ready to meet Ukraine at the level of technical experts and to investigate claims about the origin of Russian drones.

In recent months, Washington has looked to increase pressure on Moscow over its invasion, which has reduced cities to rubble and killed and wounded thousands. Mr Cleverly has described the invasion of Ukraine as a "flagrant breach" of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that is "heaping misery" on millions of Syrians and Yemenis by driving up food prices.

"No country is immune from the turmoil he has brought to world energy markets or the damage he has caused to global food security," he said. "[Russian President Vladimir] Putin's war is inflicting yet more suffering on Syrians and [Yemenis](#), who were already enduring the privations of humanitarian emergency, and ordinary Lebanese, caught up in economic crisis."

Mr Cleverly said Russia was losing the war in Ukraine. "It should be dawning on other regimes who might have been tempted to behave similarly that most of the world is determined to ensure that aggression does not pay," he said.

He called on the international community to work together to ensure Russia is faced with collective sanctions to stop the conflict.

"We have learnt that sanctions are most effective when they are internationally co-ordinated," he said.

The war in Ukraine is a "conflict that attacks the foundations of peace and stability that we have enjoyed for decades", he said.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Hidden message: Call us, the UK, to save you! Terror-lustful people in high places!

King Charles III Gives Kate Middleton a Royal New Title

Source: <https://www.nbcconnecticut.com/entertainment/entertainment-news/kate-middleton-receives-new-royal-title/2941522/>

Dec 21 – Three months after being [given the title of Princess of Wales](#) by [King Charles III](#), the 40-year-old has been made an honorary Colonel of the Irish Guards, a title previously given to her husband [Prince William](#) more than 10 years ago, per the [Evening Standard](#), citing the [Buckingham Palace](#). Prince William was the Irish Guards' first Royal Colonel.

Amid the change-up, Prince William will now inherit the title of Colonel of the Welsh Guards from King Charles, according to the outlet. Meanwhile, King Charles' wife [Queen Consort Camilla](#) has been





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appointed the Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, a role [vacated by Prince Andrew](#) in January when he was [stripped of military affiliations and royal patronages](#).

Furthermore, the Palace announced that King Charles' birthday parade—formally dubbed [Trooping the Colour](#)—will be held on June 17, 2023, just six weeks after his [scheduled coronation](#). Per the Standard, the major event will feature over 1,400 parading soldiers, 200 horses and 400 musicians, with King Charles and his son Prince William riding on horseback in celebration of the armed forces. The forthcoming Trooping the Colour—traditionally held in a warm month, regardless of the monarch's actual birthday—will be King Charles' first one since succeeding the throne from his late mother [Queen Elizabeth II](#), who [passed away on Sept. 8 at the age of 96](#).

Recently, the late Queen Elizabeth was [honored during a Christmas carol service](#) held at London's Westminster Abbey. On Dec. 15, King Charles and Camilla were joined by Prince William and Kate, as well as their eldest children [Prince George](#), 9, and [Princess Charlotte](#), 7, for a festive gathering that featured a Christmas tree decorated with [Paddington Bear](#) ornaments in honor of Her Majesty.

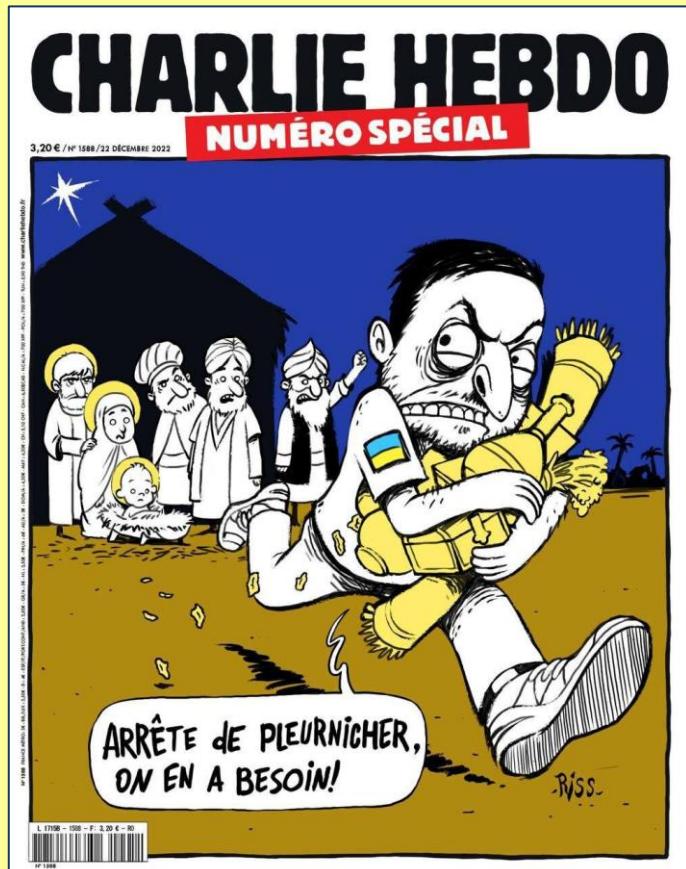
"Thank you to everyone who has helped make #TogetherAtChristmas so special," the Prince and Princess of Wales [said in a social media statement](#) following the event. "It was fantastic to celebrate inspiring individuals and outstanding organisations with you all."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: The Irish Guards were formed on 1 April 1900 by order of Queen Victoria to commemorate the Irishmen who fought in the Second Boer War for the British Empire. The Irish Guards is one of the Foot Guards regiments of the British Army and is part of the Guards Division. Together with the Royal Irish Regiment, it is one of the two Irish infantry regiments in the British Army. The regiment has participated in campaigns in the First World War, the Second World War, the Iraq War, and the War in Afghanistan as well as numerous other operations throughout its history. The Irish Guards claim [six Victoria Cross](#) recipients, four from the First World War and two from the Second World War. It takes a lot of effort and sweat to become a Colonel of the Regiment and it is kind of embarrassing to give the same rank to a civilian as if it was a gift like a bag, a pair of shoes or a nice sweater.

The new cover of Charlie Hebdo

The new cover of "Charlie Hebdo" is dedicated to Zelensky!

"Stop whining, I need it" Zelensky says, running with gifts from the Wise Men!





US accuses Russia of using weapons from North Korea, Iran in Ukraine in violation of UN resolutions

Russian private military company Wagner's purchase of weapons from North Korea contributes to instability on Korean peninsula, says US envoy

Source: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/americas/us-accuses-russia-of-using-weapons-from-north-korea-iran-in-ukraine-in-violation-of-un-resolutions-/2770674>

Dec 22 – The US accused Russia on Thursday of using weapons in Ukraine procured from North Korea and Iran – violations of UN Security Council resolutions.

"The United States can confirm that the DPRK has completed an initial arms delivery to the Russian private military company known as Wagner, which paid for the equipment and currently has thousands of troops deployed to Ukraine," said American envoy to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

"Last month the DPRK delivered infantry rockets and missiles into Russia for use by Wagner."

She said it is "despicable" that Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, is using weapons from North Korea and Iran.

"Wagner's purchase of weapons from the DPRK to wreak destruction in Ukraine also contributes to instability on the Korean peninsula by giving the DPRK funds it can use to further develop its prohibited weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs," she said.

Thomas-Greenfield said the US intends to raise North Korea's and Russia's violations in future meetings with the Council.

She renewed her call for the UN to send a team to Ukraine to investigate Russia's use of Iranian drones against Ukraine's infrastructure.

Russia denies it used Iranian drones in Ukraine and opposes any UN investigation.

Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said earlier that the UN "should not bow to pressure from Western countries."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Article's title and subtitle from another planet! Hello! Something called "war" is happening in our universe!

The Top Ten Global Risks of 2023

By Mathew Burrows and Robert A. Manning

Source: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/top-ten-global-risks-2023-206027>

Dec 19 – Drawing on our many years of experience in forecasting global risks and trends at the U.S. Intelligence Community's National Intelligence Council, where we were tasked with providing U.S. leaders with long-range analysis and insights, we have identified the top global risks in 2023 from a U.S. and global perspective. Our track record is pretty good based on the [risks we identified for 2022](#). COVID variants were indeed a source of concern, particularly in China, holding down Chinese economic growth, as we also predicted. We forecasted a Russian invasion of Ukraine and oil prices reaching \$100 a barrel, which occurred earlier this year, although energy prices have declined somewhat in the second half of 2022. Food shortages, economic crises, and growing debt problems among developing countries were all highlighted last year, as they are this year. Some economists anticipate the debt crisis may not be as widespread as we and others have projected, but low- and middle-income countries, such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are already facing this reality. Last year's prediction about a shortfall in fighting climate change was borne out at the underwhelming COP27 gathering in Cairo, Egypt, in November; we assess this trend will continue in 2023. Finally, owing to the growing tensions surrounding Taiwan, as well as the U.S. embargo on the export of high-end semiconductor designs and equipment, Sino-U.S. differences will persist in 2023.

Each risk is assigned a probability. A medium probability means there is a 50/50 chance that the risk will play out as we anticipate this year. Making such projections has become more difficult because so many of the risks are interlocked with one another. *Polycrisis* is the term being used to describe the interwoven nature of one crisis embedded in others. Although polycrises have existed before, the Ukraine War has highlighted the current set of interdependent crises facing the world. The food crisis was exacerbated by Ukraine's inability to export its grains until recently. The energy crisis is rooted in Western efforts to deny energy profits to the Russian war machine and Vladimir Putin's retaliation in cutting gas supplies to Europe. Inflation has been boosted owing to energy- and food-price hikes, but it is also linked to supply chain disruptions resulting from the pandemic. As with debt, inflation is also rooted in the increasing prices of commodities because of the war





in Ukraine, as well as the strong dollar and fiscal outlays by states to combat the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. The fact that most of the risks are interrelated means that the reduction in risk of any single one will depend on many other risks decreasing concurrently. Similarly, the severity of any single risk is linked to and often aggravates others. Nevertheless, we think it useful to examine each risk individually, keeping in mind the interlocked nature of all risks, and forecasting the direction that each will move in terms of probability—higher or lower—even though any individual risk cannot completely diminish while the others have not been resolved.

The Risks

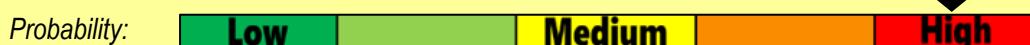
1) Polycrisis from the Ukraine War: The endgame in Ukraine, and how and when it will occur remain a mystery. Yet the polycrisis loop cascading from the war—energy and food insecurity, inflation, economic slowdown—may be generating “Ukraine fatigue” in the West, threatening vital support. As winter sets in, and the war slows, Putin will undoubtedly step up his [strategy of attrition](#), attacking Ukraine’s energy and water infrastructure, seeking to make Ukraine collapse as a functioning state before his losses force him to accept some degree of defeat.

Kyiv’s [taking of Kherson](#) in the south and parts of the Donbas in the northeast—more than [50% of the land that Moscow once occupied](#)—since February 24 strengthens its hand. A negotiated resolution—or even a ceasefire and stable armistice—is still premature because both sides feel they can win. Kyiv issued a [10-point peace plan](#) at the November G-20 meeting. It demanded that Russia withdraw from all of Ukraine’s sovereign territory and pay damages; in effect, it calls for Putin’s total surrender. Conflicting pressures are pushing and pulling: on the one hand, Kyiv is asking for U.S./NATO to send more advanced, including long-range weapons like Army tactical missile systems and missile defenses; meanwhile, some members of the U.S. Congress want to curb support for Ukraine.

The war is generating multiple interconnected risks: these include an ongoing, stalemated conflict; escalation if the U.S./NATO sends additional advanced weapons to Kyiv in response to Putin’s bombings; Russian use of nuclear weapons if Kyiv tries to take Crimea; “Ukraine fatigue” in Europe as recession sets in; and a U.S.-EU divide over the quantity and quality of military assistance to continue to provide to Kyiv.



2) Growing Food Insecurity: The [World Food Program](#) (WFP) has highlighted a “ring of fire” of hunger and malnutrition stretching across the globe from Central America and Haiti, through North Africa, the Sahel, Ghana, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan and then eastward to the Horn of Africa, Syria, and Yemen and extending to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The number of people facing acute food insecurity has soared from 135 million to 345 million since 2019. Even if the war in Ukraine is resolved peacefully and future grain shipments from Ukraine are not in peril, food shortages will still exist. In addition to conflict, climate change—which is causing more severe droughts and changing precipitation patterns—is a major driver of food insecurity and is unlikely to be effectively mitigated in 2023. Soaring diesel fuel and fertilizer costs, exacerbated by the Ukraine war and supply chain issues (getting crops to market and meat/poultry processing), have increased costs for feeding livestock and dairy animals. Costs for humanitarian relief are increasing because of inflation: The extra amount that the WFP now spends on operating costs would have previously fed 4 million people for one month.



3) Upheaval and Confrontation with Iran: As with the Ukraine war, the unprecedented popular uprising could turn Iran into a polycrisis. The stars are already aligned for a dangerous new U.S. and/or Israeli conflict with Tehran. The Iran nuclear deal—on the brink of success just a few months ago—is now dormant, if not dead. Iran is accelerating production of near-bomb-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU, it has 60% of the 90% required for a bomb) and is only weeks away from having enough to produce a bomb and will have a deliverable warhead in two years or less.

Iran’s provision of drones and missiles to Russia add a new dimension to the confrontation and an impetus for new sanctions. The depleted legitimacy of the theocracy and repression of the unprecedented popular uprising adds uncertainty. Iran may be one mass strike away from a political revolution—a low-probability, high-consequence event.

A new far-right government in Israel and a Republican House of Representatives in the United States will intensify pressure to bomb or sabotage Tehran’s enrichment plant at Fordow as well as Iran’s missile and drone facilities. In response, Iran could strike Saudi oil facilities or oil tankers in the Gulf of Hormuz,



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disrupting oil traffic as the risk of an escalatory conflict grows. Popular protests bringing down the theocracy is a low-probability, very high-consequence event that could transform the geopolitics in an already troubled Middle East.

Probability of confrontation:



4) Worsening Debt Crises in Developing World: The UN Development Program ([UNDP](#)) has warned that 54 low- and middle-income countries have “severe debt problems.” These countries account for 18% of the global population, more than 50% of people living in extreme poverty, and 28 of the world’s top-50 most climate-vulnerable countries. Historically, debt relief has come “too little too late.” Solvency problems have initially often been mistaken for liquidity problems, leading to protracted debt crises with severe economic consequences. Low-income countries, such as Somalia and Zimbabwe, are at the top of UNDP’s economically distressed countries list, but Oxford Economics assesses that many emerging market countries will weather the storm, having already cut back on expenditures early in the downward cycle. The dire fiscal circumstances of most developing states is a bad omen for reaching the UN’s sustainable development goals by 2030. Instead, the developing world is likely to experience more poverty, less educational improvement, and decreased ability to fight climate change in 2023.

Probability:



5) Spiraling Global Debt: Both the [corporate debt](#) of nonfinancial companies (\$88 trillion, about 98% of global GDP), as well as combined government, corporate, and household debt (\$290 trillion by the third quarter of 2022), have been increasing during the past four-to-five years [according to the International Institute of Finance](#). Several years of low—in some cases, negative—interest rates, fueling easy money, [help to explain this situation](#). Although the total has declined slightly, the polycrisis of heightened interest rates, a strong dollar, a recession in Europe, a weak Chinese economy, and uncertainties over Ukraine is likely to spark another regional or even global financial crisis. The magnitude of debt is substantially larger than that during the 2007–08 financial crisis, and the fiscal conditions in major OECD countries are more problematic. Still more troubling is the declining level of international cooperation, which is much less favorable than in 2008. A Republican Congress is less likely to approve expanding IMF and World Bank resources needed to prevent defaults and reschedule debt, particularly in developing countries, but also potentially in Italy. The G-20 played a key role in the 2007–08 financial crisis but judging from the November G-20 meeting in Bali, coordinating efforts to manage debt are inadequate. China, the largest creditor to developing countries, prefers to manage debt bilaterally, and fraught U.S.-China ties suggest that Beijing will be unlikely to cooperate with Washington as it did in 2008. Sparks triggering a new major financial crisis could come via default threats from one or more developing states or Italy, a Lehman Brothers-type corporate collapse, or panic if the war in Ukraine escalates to the nuclear level.

Probability: Regional crisis: Medium+; global crisis: Medium



6) Deepening Global Cooperation Deficit: Global risks, ranging from climate change and least developed countries (LDC) debt to outer space debris, are growing as increasing major-power competition is making it harder to achieve cooperation on common global problems. After the November G-20 meeting between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the two leaders agreed to resume bilateral talks on climate change. However, another clash over Taiwan will probably halt that effort. The multilateral trading system is fraying badly, as [WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala](#) recently warned, even though the costs of protectionism and self-sufficiency efforts by major powers will slow economic growth for all countries. Other institutions are proving ineffective: The G-20 has been slow to defuse growing debt crises among the hardest-hit countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and others, while the World Bank has come under stiff criticism by developing countries for not shifting more financing to the fight against climate change. Absent more action by multilateral institutions to confront today’s challenges, the legitimacy of the post-World-War-II Western liberal order will erode, particularly in the eyes of many Global South countries, which are now seeing their chances for rapid economic development diminish. Another consequence of economic nationalism driving a failure to cooperate in reforming and updating global institution is fragmentation of the international order into regional clusters and inefficient competing norms and standards. A breakdown in the multilateral system will only increase the risks of greater poverty, nationalism, and conflict.

Probability:





7) A Technopolarized and Fragmented System: [Boston Consulting Group](#) estimates that if major powers try to achieve full-scale self-sufficiency in semiconductors as the Biden administration wants to do, up-front investment could reach \$1 trillion and chips would cost 35-to-65% more. As the Sino-U.S. tech war heats up, China will not have access to many foreign products and will need to substitute China-made items, undermining the incentive for adherence to global standards. [A McKinsey Global Institute](#) study found in an examination of 81 technologies under development that China has so far been using global standards for more than 90% of them. In many of those cases, Beijing has been relying on foreign multinational companies for 20-40% of needed inputs. Because semiconductors are playing an increasing role in all consumer goods, not just electronics or high-end technological equipment, the markets for all manufacturing goods are likely to fragment with more costs (read inflation) and less choice for consumers. Over the longer term, a decoupling of the world economy into two self-contained Western and Chinese blocs would see global GDP decrease by at least 5%—worse than the damage from the financial crisis in 2007-08, according to the [WTO](#). [IMF modeling](#) shows “growth prospects for developing economies under that scenario would darken, with some facing double-digit welfare losses.”



8) Worsening Impacts of Climate Change: COP27 ended with more frustration than a sense of achievement. Calls to phase out fossil fuels were blocked by oil-producing states even as limiting the temperature rise to the 1.5C was kept as a goal. [Most scientists](#) think the world will soon reach that 1.5-degree Celsius increase and that we are on track for an eventual 2.2-degree Celsius rise unless countries commit to a 43% cut in total greenhouse gas emissions. A hotter climate means more extended droughts and floods, as well as dangerous changes in precipitation patterns that are set to disrupt agricultural yields. The only semi-bright spot at COP27 was agreement on a new “loss-and-damage” fund to help developing countries cover the costs of climate-change impacts. Nevertheless, no decision was made on how much funding the industrialized world would promise to pay. Western countries are already on the hook for providing financial assistance to developing countries with their transition to a lower carbon world and have not [fulfilled those promises](#). [Republicans](#), now in control of the House, have already said they do not want to pay others to fight climate change. The rightward, more nationalistic shift in European politics may also endanger the funding of “loss-and-damage” in future years. Despite the growing frequency of extreme weather events -- which affect all countries, not just poor ones -- climate change is yet to be an overriding priority for the industrialized West.



9) Deepening U.S.-China Tensions: Despite the November Biden-Xi Summit, where both leaders launched an effort to stabilize relations, fundamental differences remain over Taiwan, technology rules and standards, trade, human rights, and Beijing’s aggression based on discredited territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. An initial resumption of trade, climate, and military-to-military dialogues has begun, but volatile nationalism on both sides could disrupt any substantive achievements. Beijing’s response so far to the Biden administration’s export ban on artificial intelligence and supercomputer chips and chip-making equipment has been to [file a WTO complaint](#) against it, and plan to invest an [additional \\$143 billion in subsidies](#) to its semiconductor industry. The measures seek to choke off China’s development of top-end tech. While there is a bipartisan antipathy toward China, the incoming GOP-controlled House plans to undertake a still more [aggressive China-bashing](#) agenda on Taiwan, trade, and human rights, which risks undermining Biden’s agenda. Although we judge the probability of China’s trying to coerce Taiwan into unification in 2023 or several years beyond to be extremely low, the pending Taiwan Policy Act, which aims to boost military and political ties to Taiwan, would reignite the tit-for-tat shows of resolve and mutual demonization. The effort to stabilize the relationship faces serious speed bumps ahead and may be derailed.



10) A More Dangerous Predicament on the Korean Peninsula: Pyongyang’s relentless testing of a full spectrum of ballistic missiles (86 tests in 2022); cruise missiles; tactical nuke-capable, mobile, medium-range missiles; and ICBMs is part of North Korea’s agenda to create a survivable second-strike arsenal and provide more options for coercion and possible attack. Preparations for a seventh nuclear test have been in place for months, as the U.S. and South Korean governments have been warning. A possible aid-for-restraint understanding between Pyongyang and Beijing may explain why such a test has not occurred. Nevertheless, if a seventh test occurs and Beijing vetoes UN Security Council sanctions aimed at punishing North Korea, the rift in U.S.-China ties will probably deepen. Pyongyang’s arsenal is already far



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

more than needed for mutual deterrence with the U.S. and ROK. President Kim Jung Un may be tempted to take provocative actions based on miscalculation that could foment a crisis and/or North-South clash.

Probability:  Low Medium High

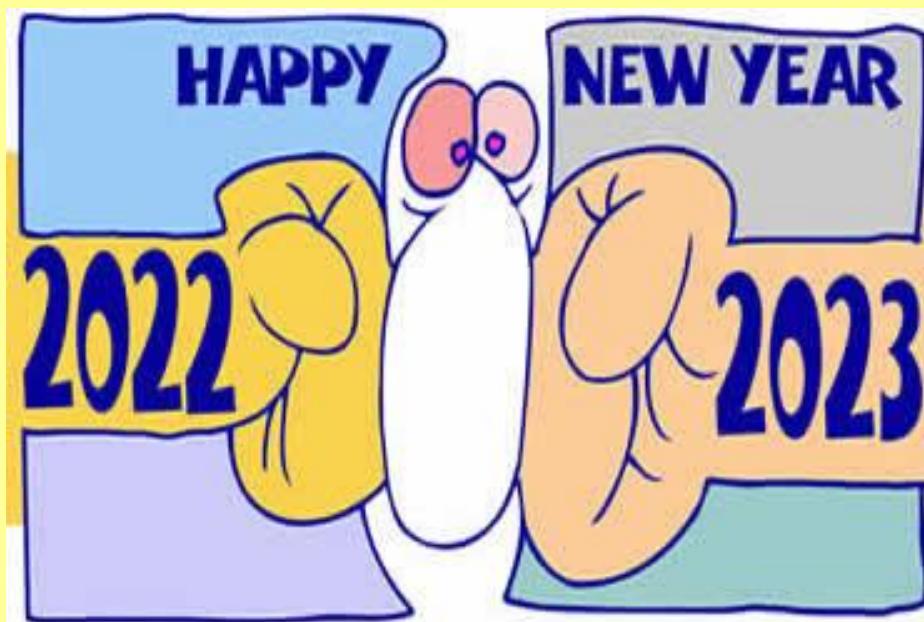
Unknown-Unknown Risks

The risks discussed above are, in former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's term, "known unknowns"—discernable developments or trends whose possible trajectories can be assessed. In addition, there are a range of "unknown unknowns"—events we cannot anticipate that would have catastrophic consequences. Among them: a supervolcano eruption (Yellowstone, Indonesia, Japan); a giant asteroid of 6 miles wide, a magnitude that killed off dinosaurs 66 million years ago; a solar storm—coronal mass injection—hurling large amounts of magnetically charged particles at Earth that could disable grids for weeks or months; and radioactive gamma ray bursts from deep space. As we have seen from the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of viruses on our planet could spark future pandemics, some more difficult to counter than COVID.

All are low-probability, very high-impact disasters.

 Low Medium High

Mathew Burrows and **Robert Manning** are distinguished fellows in the Stimson Center's Reimagining U.S. Grand Strategy Program.





T-NEWS



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DIARY



Islamism is still the biggest terror threat we face

By Wasiq Wasiq

Source: <https://www.spiked-online.com/2022/11/23/islamism-is-still-the-biggest-terror-threat-we-face/>



Nov 23 – Islamist terror remains the largest terror threat to the UK, by a significant margin. According to MI5 director general Ken McCallum, who gave his [annual threat update](#) last week, Islamists make up three-quarters of the MI5's terrorist caseload. Yet despite this, it seems there is a widespread reluctance not only to acknowledge this threat, but also to name it.

Just days before MI5's threat update, the [National Association of Muslim Police \(NAMP\)](#) called on the home secretary and the police force to **stop using terms such as 'Islamism', 'Islamist' and 'jihadism'**. NAMP cites a survey it conducted two years ago, which claimed to reveal that '85 per cent of Muslim police respondents and 92 per cent of Muslim community respondents believed that the use of such terminology had a direct link to Islamophobic sentiment'.

While it is not clear how these so-called Islamophobic sentiments are supposed to manifest themselves, when all we're talking about here is naming the ideology driving terrorism, other research suggests that British Muslims do not share the view that it is too dangerous to talk about Islamist terrorism in frank terms. Like the British public more broadly, the vast majority of British Muslims take Islamist terror extremely seriously.

Research carried out by consultancy [Crest Advisory](#) in 2020 found that British Muslims are 'not in denial about the threat of extreme Islamism'. Just under two-thirds of British Muslims (63 per cent) report being worried about 'extreme Islamism', which is broadly in line with the British public as a whole (67 per cent). Most Muslims also trust the police when it comes to 'countering extremism / terrorism'. In fact, they trust the police more when it comes to terrorism than they trust the police to deal with lesser crimes, such as burglary.

NAMP argues that we should replace the term 'Islamism' with new descriptors, such as 'Daesh-inspired terrorism' or 'anti-Western extremism'. This is absurd. All this does is exonerate the ideology that is wreaking so much havoc.

'Islamism' is an entirely appropriate and accurate way to describe the political ideology that motivates most of the terrorist acts in Britain today. Those who want to set up a caliphate and live under Sharia law are Islamists. Those who would fight with ISIS are Islamists. Those who killed innocent people at Manchester Arena, or on London Bridge, or on 7/7, or on so many other tragic occasions in recent decades, did so because they are Islamists.





It is not Islamophobic to say this. It is simply a statement of fact. In Britain, nearly a hundred people have been killed by violent Islamists since 2005. When NAMP claims that using the term Islamism could increase Islamophobic sentiments, it places the feelings of imagined victims over the actual victims of this deadly ideology.

The security services should be in the business of thwarting terrorist attacks. Instead, they are in danger of being thwarted by the snowflakes in their own ranks, who get upset whenever terrorism is described accurately.

There is no need for all this linguistic policing. The British public can quite easily distinguish between the religion of Islam and the political ideology of Islamism. They can also distinguish between ordinary Muslims and extreme Islamists. The idea that using terms such as 'Islamism' and 'Islamists' will increase Islamophobic sentiments speaks to a bigoted view of ordinary Britons as stupid and racist.

If we cannot even name the ideology that threatens us, then what hope do we have of defending ourselves against it?

Wasiq is an academic specialising in law and terrorism.

UN Counterterrorism and Technology: What Role for Human Rights in Security?

By Tomaso Falchetta and Anna Oosterlinck

Source: <https://www.justsecurity.org/84246/un-counterterrorism-and-technology-what-role-for-human-rights-in-security/>

Nov 23 – The first meeting of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) held outside of U.N. headquarters in New York since 2015 marked important advances in engaging with civil society and experts who have questioned the embrace of counterterrorism approaches that too often backfire or result in human rights violations. But the Delhi Declaration that emerged reflected little of that input. Prepared mostly in advance, the meeting's outcome document merely confirmed the trend towards further expansion of the U.N. counterterrorism agenda related to the use of new and emerging technologies, with little attention to the abuses committed by governments in the process.

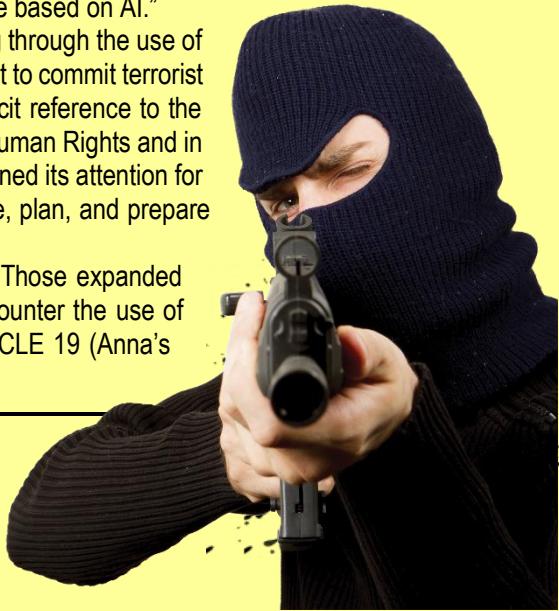
The Oct. 28-29 meeting, conducted in India, was convened to discuss a specific element of the fight against terrorism: "Countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes." The Security Council has sought for more than 20 years to address the perceived exploitation of information and communications technology (ICT) and related technologies for terrorist purposes. Adopted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks of 2001, Security Council resolution 1373 referred from the beginning to ICT and the abuse of communications technologies by terrorists.

Most notably in the last five years, the Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, imposing legally binding obligations on all U.N. member states to introduce biometrics technologies at borders for counterterrorism purposes; to develop capabilities to collect, process and analyze travelers' data, such as Advance Passenger Identification (API) and passenger name record (PNR) data; and to take action to prevent, investigate, and prosecute terrorism financing.

These resolutions have led to a significant expansion of surveillance powers by member states, often introduced without an adequate domestic legal framework and human rights safeguards. For example, Privacy International (Tomaso's organization) has documented the human rights abuses stemming from biometric data identification systems across the globe since the Security Council adopted resolution 2396 in 2017. In its December 2021 analytical briefing on biometrics and counter-terrorism, the U.N. Counter-terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) noted how "the use of biometrics for counter-terrorism purposes – notably in the context of border management and security – has become increasingly widespread." CTED's own assessments show that many states "still lack sufficient legal and regulatory frameworks, data management and processing protocols, risk and impact assessment practices, and rigorous access controls and records for technology-based systems, including those based on AI."

In addition, the Security Council has sought to address incitement to terrorism, including through the use of ICTs. Resolution 1624 (2005) contained a clear obligation for States to prohibit incitement to commit terrorist acts. At least in that case, it contains a strong human rights clause, including an explicit reference to the right to freedom of expression as reflected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 2010, the Security Council turned its attention for the first time to the use of the internet, including to incite terrorists as well as to finance, plan, and prepare terrorist actions.

These resolutions then served as building blocks for several subsequent resolutions. Those expanded attempted regulation of terrorist narratives, and instructed member States on how to counter the use of the internet, other ICTs, and other emerging technologies for terrorist purposes. ARTICLE 19 (Anna's





organization) has documented how these broad, sweeping provisions have led governments to adopt laws [criminalizing “extremist speech](#) that does not amount to incitement; to [block](#), filter, or ban websites; and to [remove or restrict certain online content](#) in a manner that violates freedom of expression and the right to privacy.

The CTC's special meeting in India and the preparatory technical meetings that preceded it proved no different in the committee's approach. The focus of the debate in most of the panels was on the real and perceived threats of abuses of ICT by terrorists; human rights got short shrift, as did even legitimate questions about the credibility of evidence cited for the alleged terrorist abuses.

A notable exception to this trend was a civil society roundtable organized by CTED on Oct. 12, in which participants pointed to some of the most significant human rights concerns raised by government counterterrorism measures. At the special meeting itself, the CTC also for the first time allowed the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights to address one of its formal meetings and invited civil society representatives to participate. This allowed CSOs, including ours (Privacy International and ARTICLE 19, respectively), to deliver their messages directly to members of the CTC, other member States, CTED, the U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism, and other U.N. representatives. This level of access is highly welcomed, and it hopefully will set a precedent for future engagement between the CTC and civil society.

Key Takeaways and Shortcomings of the Declaration

In terms of substance, the Delhi Declaration covers three topics in relatively broad fashion: “Countering terrorist exploitation of ICT and emerging technologies,” “Threats and opportunities related to new payment technologies and fundraising methods,” and “Threats posed by misuse of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) by terrorists.”

Of these three topics, the abuse of ICT and emerging technologies by terrorists is the least defined. It could be interpreted to cover a vast range of measures — anything from content moderation to social media monitoring, from limiting the use of encryption to resorting to hacking for surveillance — all in the name of countering terrorism. It essentially encourages governments to introduce counterterrorism measures with a view to addressing abuses of ICT that will likely end up undermining human rights, particularly the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression.

Ironically, such abuses ultimately will undermine national security itself. In our intervention at the special session, Privacy International expressed its concerns at the expansion of new technologies employed for the surveillance of public spaces, whether online or offline, in the name of countering terrorism. It noted that social media monitoring is often justified as a form of content moderation for counterterrorism purposes, but that it is also abused to surveil peaceful assemblies and profile people's social conduct. Privacy International also noted how attempts by governments to access encrypted communications to identify potential terrorist threats risk introducing vulnerabilities into the systems; the result could be indiscriminate surveillance of digital communications, compromising the privacy and security of potentially all users of digital communication services.

ARTICLE 19 offered eight concrete recommendations to the CTC and the international community at large on how to ensure human rights safeguards and the rule of law while countering terrorism. These include key tenets for a successful fight against terrorism: 1) security without rights is meaningless and rights inherently advance security; and 2) international human rights law dictates that the same rights apply online as offline. States can only restrict free speech on the basis of national security if the principles of legality, legitimacy, proportionality, and necessity have all been met. In terms of addressing terrorist content online, States should take a careful approach when regulating how social media platforms should undertake [content moderation](#). State regulation should not prescribe what content to restrict, but rather focus platform accountability on processes, access to effective remedies, transparency, and human rights protections, including through impact assessments.

Unsurprisingly, given that the text was negotiated by the 15 CTC member States behind closed doors and well ahead of the meeting in India, the Delhi Declaration does not seek to address these or other concerns raised by civil society organizations and human rights experts.

The declaration does include the reaffirmation that “Member States must ensure that any measures taken to counter terrorism, including the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, respect the Charter of the United Nations and comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law, as applicable” (paragraph 14 of the Delhi Declaration). However, it fails to refer to the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency and effective redress for human rights violations. All of those issues have been raised consistently by human rights experts and civil society.

Little Guidance on Rights Obligations

The Delhi Declaration offers hardly any guidance on how States' counterterrorism measures should comply with existing human rights obligations. And it offers only a vague blueprint for the next steps the U.N. CTC and CTED will take in this field. CTED is expected to play a leading role in the follow-up to





declaration, including in the identification of trends, the development of threat analysis, the collation of good practices and the production of a gap analysis on the capacities of member States to counter the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes. In doing so, CTED is expected “to deepen its engagement and cooperation with civil society, including women and women’s organizations.”

As many civil society organizations noted during their presentations, there cannot be security without putting human rights at the center of any and all counterterrorism efforts. And counterterrorism policies or principles cannot be effective if they are developed in a vacuum, without the meaningful participation of human rights experts and diverse and independent civil society organizations. Failing to do so will lead to the criminalization of speech not amounting to incitement, based on the vagaries of potentially abusive governments, and it will spur content restrictions that violate freedom of expression.

It will not result in effective counterterrorism, and it is highly likely to lead to further erosion of human rights and the rule of law. The planned follow-up to the Delhi Declaration, in particular the drafting of “non-binding guiding principles” by the committee on ICT and terrorism, offers an important opportunity for the U.N. CTC and CTED to prove their commitment to meaningfully include civil society organizations and human rights experts in the development of counterterrorism policies.

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Anna Oosterlinck is Head of U.N. at ARTICLE 19, an international human rights organization promoting freedom of expression and related rights. She previously serviced twice on the U.N. Security Council during Belgium's elected membership terms, and in a 2015 appointment by the U.N. Secretary-General as the Human Rights Expert on the U.N. Panel of Experts for South Sudan.

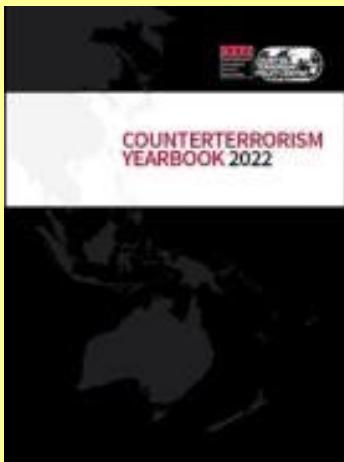
EDITOR'S COMMENT: Independably of age, sex, nationality, race, and religion: Human rights for terrorists?

Counterterrorism yearbook 2022: the road from 9/11

By Gill Savage

Source: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/counterterrorism-yearbook-2022-the-road-from-9-11/>





Nov 24 – It's been more than two decades since the [11 September 2001 terror attacks](#) on the United States. Two planes hit the World Trade Center, one hit the Pentagon and a fourth crashed in Pennsylvania. Close to 3,000 people died, many were injured, and even more were traumatised by the experience and the loss of loved ones. Today's release of the [Counterterrorism yearbook 2022](#) coincides with the anniversary of the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist [attacks](#) which caused the deaths of 174 people. These and other acts of terror have left an indelible mark and shaped the world as we know it today.

Australia's overall security environment is increasingly challenging to navigate. Emerging threats such as information operation campaigns, cyberattacks and climate change are intensifying the complexity of the world's human security challenges. Policymakers face an era of complex continuous and concurrent crises. In 2022, major geopolitical events, including Russia's war on Ukraine and China's continuing coercive operations and aggression, occupied a significant place in the national discourse. Foreign interference and espionage have continued to rise to the forefront of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation's priorities.

Yet terrorism prevails as a significant security concern for Australia and the wider region. These continuing challenges mean that the sixth edition of ASPI's *Counterterrorism yearbook* is as important as ever.

ASPI's executive director, Justin Bassi, notes in the preface that, 'while terrorism is no longer assessed by ASIO to be our top security threat, it hasn't disappeared and in fact continues to be one of the predominant security concerns for Australia and the region.'

I coedited the *Counterterrorism yearbook 2022* with Katja Theodorakis, head of ASPI's counterterrorism, countering violent extremism and resilience program, which examines counterterrorism challenges through the broader lens of today's global challenges, exploring wider policy considerations through a range of chapters from 16 expert authors.

Theodorakis notes in the introduction: For most of the past two decades, terrorism and extremism were largely seen as an external issue brought to Australia by foreign problems. Even when talking about 'homegrown jihadists', extremist ideological motivations were generally ascribed to global terrorist sources in faraway places.

Motivated violent extremist groups continue to have a presence and are increasingly accompanied by issue-specific radicalised individuals. A key aspect of the changing environment is the use of social media by extremist groups to tap into public discord arising from Covid-19 lockdowns and vaccination mandates, as well as violence driven by divisive political agendas in democratic countries like the US Capitol riot in 2020. Bassi also notes: Beyond our borders, it remains the case that Australians are at risk of being affected by terrorism in our near region. Governments, policymakers and intelligence analysts will need to maintain an awareness of the implications of the Taliban's control of Afghanistan following the US withdrawal, including in relation to the risks of ungoverned spaces being used by terrorist groups and the rekindling of extremist links into Southeast Asia. The return of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri to Kabul, where he was killed by a US operation, emphasises that our work in countering terrorism and violent extremism abroad is not complete. Post-withdrawal, much of the work by countries such as Australia to monitor and prevent the spread of extremism and terrorism from Afghanistan will have to be done from outside that country's borders.

The *Counterterrorism yearbook 2022* is presented in three parts. The first provides a snapshot of the world context involving trends abroad, including in our region. The second looks at challenges closer to home, such as the impact of Covid-19 on radicalisation and the role of police in managing extremism that has not reached a threshold of violence, or 'precrime policing'. The third explores wider policy considerations, including those related to strategic competition, democracy and multiculturalism.

This edition includes chapters on forecasting extremism in Southeast Asia by Munira Mustaffa, precrime policing and extremism by ASPI's John Coyne, teen radicalisation by ASPI's Jasmine Latimore and me, strategic competition and counterterrorism by Andrew Zammit, and multiculturalism by Theodorakis. It also includes a conversation with Levi West on strategic trends in terrorism.

A dominant theme is that the increasing complexity of the strategic context and the terrorism threat means there are no easy solutions. Strategies to address it need to emphasise the importance of understanding security as a shared responsibility that requires a broad, whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach extending beyond the remit of security agencies. The role of security agencies to identify and prevent threats is as vital as ever, but there's a crucial need to simultaneously focus on national resilience as a means of withstanding challenges such as economic crises, pandemics, foreign interference, online disinformation and cyberattacks. Strengthened national resilience will help ensure that social cohesion is maintained even in challenging times and that those who would do us harm are unable to leverage crises and threats to create societal division or to radicalise individuals and groups to violent extremism and terrorism. Today's national security environment is an increasingly complex one, and the impact of terrorism hasn't diminished. It represents a challenge that requires governments, community and academia to continue to work together.





Gill Savage is a senior fellow with ASPI's Northern Australia Strategic Policy Centre and deputy director of ASPI's Professional Development Centre.

Rampage at Virginia Walmart Follows Upward Trend in Supermarket Gun Attacks – Here's What We Know About Retail Mass Shooters

By Jillian Peterson and James Densley

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221123-rampage-at-virginia-walmart-follows-upward-trend-in-supermarket-gun-attacks-here-s-what-we-know-about-retail-mass-shooters>

Nov 23 – A [gun rampage at a Walmart in Virginia](#) is the latest amid a rise in mass shootings in general in the U.S., and mass shootings at [grocery and retail stores](#) in particular.

Multiple people including the gunman [were killed in the incident](#) on Nov. 22, 2022 at an outlet of the retailer in Chesapeake. It follows a [racist attack at a grocery store in Buffalo](#) earlier this year in which 10 Black shoppers were killed. A previous [Walmart mass shooting in El Paso, Texas in 2021](#) was similarly racially motivated – 23 people were killed by a gunman who had posted a hate-filled anti-immigrant manifesto online.

We [are criminologists who study the life histories of mass shooters](#) in the United States. Since 2017, we have conducted [dozens of interviews](#) with incarcerated perpetrators and people who knew them. We also built a [comprehensive database](#) of mass public shootings using public data, with the shooters coded on nearly 200 different variables.

Overall, mass public shootings in which four or more people are killed have become [more frequent, and deadly](#), in the last decade, to the extent that the U.S. now averages about seven of these events each year. Our definition of mass public shootings excludes cases in which the murders are attributed to any other underlying criminal activity, such as drugs and gang membership, which accounts for why they may be lower than other estimates. Mass shootings also tend to cluster, with [one study](#) finding they are contagious for 13 days on average and our [own research](#) showing those responsible study other mass shooters and draw inspiration from them. The Buffalo shooting on May 14 preceded a spate of mass shootings this summer, including at [an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas](#), at an [Oklahoma medical facility](#), and during a [4th of July parade in Highland Park, Illinois](#). The latest tragedy in Chesapeake, Virginia comes just three days after a gunman [killed five people at a LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs](#).

What Do We Know About Mass Shootings at Stores?

The tragedy in Chesapeake, Virginia is the [36th mass shooting in our database](#) to take place in a retail establishment. These shootings claimed 217 lives and injured 227 more, and they have been increasing over time - with 2019 and 2021 the worst years on record for retail shootings.

Retail shootings are most common in Southern and Western states and two-thirds took place in urban locations. The perpetrators were all male except for one woman who committed the shooting with her male partner.

Retail mass shooters were white in 56% of such incidents and Black in 25% of recorded cases and ranged in age from 18 to 70 – although 60% were in their 20s. Around 1 in 10 were employees of the retail establishments they targeted.

Perpetrators usually used one gun (58%). One-third of perpetrators used an AR-15 style assault weapon.

Looking at the life histories of perpetrators, two-thirds had a prior criminal history and half of them [communicated intent to do harm](#) to others ahead of the attack. Yet, retail shootings tend to be less well-planned than other mass shootings – only 22% of perpetrators did significant planning.

Two-thirds of the shooters were suicidal – 26% had a prior suicide attempt and another 37% intended to die during the shooting – and around 30% were experiencing psychosis, although [perpetrators were only acting on their hallucinations or delusions](#) in 11% of retail shootings. Half of the perpetrators had a known prejudice against a racial or religious group.

Workplace Rampages and What Motivates Them

The motive in the Virginia incident is not known, but reports suggest the perpetrator was a Walmart employee. In our data, workplace shootings are motivated by an employment issue such as being fired or suspended in 70% of incidents, and by an interpersonal conflict with another employee 23% of the time. Nearly three-quarters of perpetrators show changes in behavior or warning signs prior to the shooting, such as increased agitation. [Our research](#) suggests many strategies to prevent these types of mass shootings – from anonymous reporting systems for employees to workplace crisis response





teams. However, [restricting access to firearms](#) for high-risk people would be the most effective strategy overall.

Jillian Peterson is a Professor of Criminal Justice @ Hamline University.

James Densley is a Professor of Criminal Justice @ Metropolitan State University.

Rethinking ‘Run, Hide, Fight’

By Juliette Kayyem

Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/11/rethinking-run-hide-fight/672196/>

Nov 21 – Last night, at least five people were killed and 25 were injured in a shooting at an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The venue, Club Q, has been described as a “second home full of chosen family,” a safe space for people to be who they are. No more. The motive of the attacker remains unclear, but officials are investigating whether the attack should be classed as a hate crime. It comes against a backdrop of [continuing threats](#) against and vilification of the LGBTQ community and transgender teens, and the rise of hostile protests at gay-rights parades and events.

Early reports say the suspect, who is alive, was in possession of a “long gun.” He might have killed many more people in such a confined space if not for the actions of, according to police, “[at least two heroic people](#)” inside



the club. These individuals are believed to have confronted the gunman and stopped the in-progress massacre.

“Run, hide, fight” has been [the guiding principle](#) in my profession—security—for decades. Running is preferred; hiding if it is the only response possible; fighting if there is no other choice. The motto describes the active-shooter-response training that has emerged for populations as diverse as high-school students, office workers, and those who are out partying on a Saturday night. No active-

shooter situation is the same, so it isn’t a hard-and-fast rule, of course. Younger children, for instance, are subject to controversial [lockdown training](#) instead.

When it comes to general safety, this is what I tell my children, who are now teens and young adults: If somebody tries to grab your purse or bike, let them. No material thing is worth a potentially violent escalation. If you’ve partied too hard, call me for a ride—no questions asked. If you are in an active-shooter situation, run as fast as you can, hide if you must, and, as a last resort, fight. That’s what the experts have told parents to say: Don’t be a hero. Run. Just please, run. Get out of there.

If this all sounds clinical and antiseptic, it is. Lives are not saved in the midst of an attack by railing against our permissive gun culture. During the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, 10 of the 12 murdered students perished [inside the school library](#)—a room where they believed they could hide safely. In the years that followed, “Run, hide, fight” emerged as sort of a dismal new take on “Stop, drop, and roll.” But fighting—or engaging with the assailant—was never really taken seriously; the British, with fewer armed civilians than the U.S. but with significant domestic-terror threats, even dropped the *fight* from their training and simply urge “[Run, hide, tell](#)”—as in tell the authorities. Something about it is quaint. I’m now asking myself whether we in the U.S. have been too dismissive about fighting back. [Riley Howell](#), 21, died during a shooting on campus at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in 2019 as he charged the suspect and successfully ended the incident. Just a few weeks later, [Kendrick Castillo](#) was killed in Colorado while lunging at a shooter, his classmate, allowing for their other classmates to exit the room

or hide. Earlier this year, a massacre ended when [Elisisha Dicken](#), 22, pulled out his handgun and killed the shooter, who had already claimed three victims. Dicken’s actions, in particular, reignited a debate about responsible gun ownership and added to the thorny conversation about a “good guy with a gun.”

Shootings like the one last night at Club Q add to a sense—neither conclusive nor absolute—that fighting is indeed a viable option to stop a massacre in progress. If we are to be guided by facts, and consider our





safety training based on the available evidence, then we need to further assess whether, in an age when so much damage can be done so quickly by guns that should not be on the street, “Run, hide, fight” is still the correct public messaging. With killers having the capacity to end the lives of so many people so fast, neither running nor hiding may be the best first option. It is our reality. I don’t love it; I don’t even like it. The [chaos and delays](#) in saving children in Uvalde, Texas, have also raised skepticism about police-response capacities. According to the FBI, nearly 70 percent of all [active-shooter incidents](#) end before police arrive; nearly 37 percent of them end in two minutes or less. In the United States, we are vulnerable to gun violence at any moment.

I have struggled, in my profession, with how to measure success. In my book [*The Devil Never Sleeps: Learning to Live in an Age of Disasters*](#), “less bad”—whether things would have been worse but for an intervention—ends up being better than the alternative. At least five people partying at an LGBTQ bar were killed last night. More lives could have been lost if not for the fight of two brave heroes. I’m not ready to say I want my young kids to fight if, God forbid, they encounter a mass shooter. But I’m willing to admit that maybe I want someone present to fight for them. I don’t love it. I don’t even like it. In fact, I hate it.

Juliette Kayyem, a former assistant secretary for homeland security under President Barack Obama, is the faculty chair of the homeland-security program at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. She is the author of [*The Devil Never Sleeps: Learning to Live in an Age of Disasters*](#).

Manchester arena terrorist attack report shows why emergency service staff must be well trained

By Tom Wood

Source: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/manchester-arena-terrorist-attack-report-shows-why-emergency-service-staff-must-be-well-trained-tom-wood-3926099>

Nov 21 – The evidence of poorly trained security guards lacking the confidence to confront the suspected bomber. The lack of coordination between emergency services. The inexplicable decision by firefighters to stand off until their safety was assured.

It has a familiar ring to it. The scandal of young vulnerable girls being systematically abused by gangs of men in northern English towns had similar threads running through it. Police and social work stepping back for fear of being smeared as racist while back-up systems were either absent or inadequate to sound the alarm. It’s an old maxim that all you need to succeed is good trained people and good systems of governance. In both the Manchester bombing and the gang grooming cases, there was neither.

I wonder how this could have come about. For decades, the emergency services, including social work and other local agencies, have exercised their contingency plans for all manner of major incidents. From table-top exercises to complex live dress rehearsals, all scenarios were catered for. Fire, flood, terrorism, rail crashes, you name it, we exercised for it, all with the intention of training ourselves and getting to know the people we would be working with. The theory was simple, get used to working with other agencies in the good times and it’s easier in an emergency. These exercises were also a chance to test systems designed to impose checks and balances. Individuals may behave unpredictably in a panic, overarching systems are there to compensate for human fallibility – a fail safe. So what went wrong? Have these vital joint exercises been cut back due to financial pressures? Or have they become table-top paper chases, lacking the real-world experience of different disciplines actually working together?

As always, the conclusions of these public inquiries make much of ‘lessons learned’, but it’s not rocket science. We must continue to invest in training and make sure our ‘fail safe’ systems are thoroughly tested.

But perhaps there are some structural improvements that can be made. It has often surprised me how few emergency services share control rooms in the UK. Apart from the obvious cost savings, it would improve joint working at a stroke. In many parts of the world there are shared control rooms. Why not here? On a positive note, there are lots of well-trained people and good systems out there and just the other day I witnessed an example. I was travelling on an Edinburgh Tram when three young children, aged about eight, six, and three got onboard, obviously unaccompanied.

As I watched them, a tram inspector got on at the next stop and, kneeling down beside them, explained that they had been seen on the CCTV system and that he was there to make sure they got to their destination safely. His manner was easy and he was clearly familiar with speaking to children. When they reached their stop, I saw him escort the kids to safety, chatting all the time. A small example of a timely and appropriate safeguarding intervention well done. It was reassuring to see.

Tom Wood is a writer and former police officer.



U.S. military assistance for Ukraine approximately \$19.3 billion



Afghans are giving their hungry children medicines to sedate them; others have sold their daughters and organs to survive. In the second winter since the Taliban took over and foreign funds were frozen, millions are a step away from famine.



Islamic State: Kurdish forces threaten to stop guarding camps

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-63745833>



More than 50,000 people currently live in al-Hol, the largest detention camp for suspected IS fighters and their families (Reuters)

Nov 25 – Local forces in north-east Syria have told the BBC that they may be forced to abandon camps holding Islamic State (IS) group detainees.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said they no longer have the capacity to guard the compounds if Turkey launched a fresh ground operation there.

Turkey has attacked hundreds of targets in the region in retaliation for a bombing in Istanbul.

At least six people were killed and dozens more were wounded in the blast.

The Turkish government blames the attack on Kurdish groups, who, it says, have links with Kurdish fighters in northern Syria.

The SDF - which is backed by the US - has denied any involvement in the attack, and has accused Turkey of using it as a pretext to justify a long-planned cross-border offensive.

On Wednesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the strikes were "only the beginning" and that he was determined to secure Turkey's border with Syria by establishing a "security corridor".

But the head of the SDF, General Mazloum Abdi, has told the BBC that a ground operation would result in a resurgence of the IS terror group.

"It would lead to a second civil war in Syria and our counter-terrorism operations against IS would stop," he said. "As part of the international coalition, we fought and defeated IS, and what Turkey is doing will undermine all of it."

During the international campaign against the Islamic State group, the US relied heavily on the Kurdish forces to root out the militants from Syria, and the SDF is still in charge of the prisons and detention camps that hold suspected IS fighters and their families.

The largest of these makeshift facilities, housing the families of suspected militants, is al-Hol. More than 50,000 people live there, two thirds of whom are children.

The SDF said that a number of Turkish air strikes targeted al-Hol. The attack killed seven security officials responsible for guarding the camp. Six foreign detainees escaped during the assault, but were later recaptured.

General Abdi has warned that further Turkish attacks would directly impact his forces' ability to keep hold of these sites: "Our forces would be busy protecting our own people and families and we wouldn't be able to guard the camps."





"The Turkish authorities have targeted civilian facilities, services like power stations, oil production facilities," he added. "This will lead to mass migration and internally displaced people."

Since 2016, the Turkish military has launched three large-scale operations in northern Syria with the support of allied Syrian rebel groups, and it currently controls a swathe of territory running along more than 325km (200 miles) of its border.

The most recent operation, in 2019, saw Turkey capture the area between the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, leaving the Kurdish-controlled region of Kobane between territory controlled either by Turkey or by Turkish-backed militia.

At the time, Russia brokered a ceasefire and patrols of Turkish and Russian troops were set up to monitor the respect of the truce.

Now, Kurdish forces fear Turkey's intention is to capture Kobane. The SDF has called on both the US and Russia to exercise their powers to stop the Turkish offensive, warning it could destabilise the entire region and beyond.

"For eight years we have been fighting with the international community against terrorism, we fought together to defeat IS and now the attacks the Turkish state is carrying out are undermining all of that," General Abdi says.

"The consequences of this will be really bad not only for us but for the world."

Shun the Naysayers, Mass Shooters Are Undoubtedly Domestic Terrorists

By James Turnage

Source: <https://guardianlv.com/2022/11/shun-the-naysayers-mass-shooters-are-undoubtedly-domestic-terrorists/>

Nov 25 – FBI Director Christopher Wray declared that "domestic terrorism is the greatest danger to the American people." Mass shootings are more numerous than the days on the calendar. It is logical and necessary to refer to the men who commit mass murders with the use of a weapon of mass destruction as "terrorists."

Your Neighbor or Coworker May be the Greatest Danger to Your Life

Terrorists are haters. They hate you because of your race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, belief they have been wronged or abused, or because they hate women. Whatever their "justification," they are a danger to normal Americans, and to all Americans who are doing nothing more than going about their daily lives.

Offering "Thoughts, Prayers, and Best Wishes" is Bullshit

I am so goddamn sick and tired of our government doing nothing to make our nation safer. The NRA is evil and will say anything to protect the money they receive from gun manufacturers and gun sellers while celebrating the deaths of our nation's people. Gun sales increase with every mass shooting. Mass hysteria is contagious and a sign of ignorance. Why do we have a government if they refuse to perform the job for which they were elected? It is their responsibility to do everything in their power to make our nation safe for every man, woman, and child.

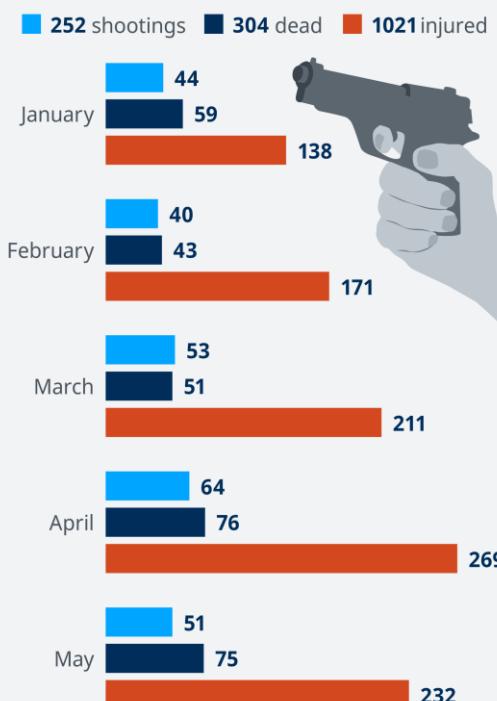
America is the Least Safe Country in the World

The truth no one will tell you is that you are not safe anywhere in America. Your life can be taken from you by your neighbor, while you are shopping at a mall or a grocery store, where you work, while attending a concert or a sporting event, while you are out to dinner or having a drink at a bar or club, attending church, or going to school. A deranged individual, with access to a weapon of mass destruction, can rob you of your life in an instant. No one is safe, regardless of who or what you are. America is less safe than any other developed nation in the world.

It is as Easy to Buy a Military Assault Rifle as a Carton of Milk

In most states, a military-style assault rifle and the high-output magazines used to expel hundreds of bullets in just seconds can be purchased without background checks. No questions asked if you have the

Mass shootings* in the US in 2022



*Defined by Gun Violence Archive as a violent crime which kills or injures four or more people.

Source: MassShootingTracker.site (May 25, 2022)





money. The coward who murdered 58 people in Las Vegas in 2017 had 12 such weapons, checked into a hotel, and had them delivered to his room. No questions asked.

Congress has the Power to Save Lives but Refuses to Act on Mass Shooting Terrorists

The absolute truth is that our legislative branch has the power to lessen and maybe end this carnage. The solutions are simple, and the men who harbor deep, unrelenting hatred for others could not murder innocent Americans without the tools given to them by the firearm industry. Congress must end its support of profits for this industry and place every citizen as a priority. They must stop hiding behind the outdated Second Amendment. The interpretation of this misnamed “gun rights law” is nothing but a lie. Its purpose was to safeguard the existence of a militia until the young nation could establish a standing army. There was no other reason.

Take our Country Back from Professional Politicians

I beg each of you to take your country back from the worst people in the world, professional politicians. They have chosen to rule over us, not to serve us. We must take our country back.

Plan ahead for each election and make your choices based primarily on a single issue. If congress refuses to place term limits on themselves, we can do it for them. We can vote every incumbent out of office in a single election, regardless of their political party or any other factor. This will send a clear message to future members of the House and Senate that this is our [country](#), not theirs. We elect them to work for us, not to do as they please for personal gain.

[James Turnage](#) is the Author of “A Brother’s Revenge”.

Composite Violent Extremism: A Radicalization Pattern Changing the Face of Terrorism

By Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Andrew Zammit, Emelie Chace-Donahue, and Madison Urban



A member of the "Proud Boys," a white nationalist group, at a "Stop the Steal" rally in 2020 (Photo by Chad Davis)

Nov 22 – Before opening fire in a Bend, Oregon, grocery store in August 2022, Ethan Miller [expressed](#) his hatred toward "EVERYONE & EVERYTHING." Bearing this out, his rambling online posts displayed racial animus and extreme misogyny. He also [railed against](#) the U.S. government's coronavirus response, police, religion, and technology. To Miller—whose attack killed two people—the 1999 Columbine High School shooters were icons and role models. But though Miller's

journal and online posts exhibit a range of extreme and targeted sentiments that seem to qualify the attack as a form of ideologically motivated violent extremism, he explicitly rejected being labeled a white supremacist or incel (involuntary celibate). Given the range of disparate sentiments that Miller expressed, if he were indeed a violent extremist, what kind should he be understood as? Miller's complex ideological profile is not unique, nor are the questions and confusion surrounding his motivations. Over the past few years, the United Kingdom and the United States have expanded their counterterrorism efforts to include individuals like Miller. British counterterrorism officials created the [mixed, unstable, or unclear ideology](#) category to include extremists who did not fit other counterterrorism





categories (for example, the extreme right). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's 2019 counterterrorism strategy addresses targeted violence alongside terrorism, in recognition of the fact that many acts of targeted violence bear the hallmarks of terrorism even if they may not be categorized as such. The FBI has also begun to employ the phrase "salad bar extremism" to describe a trend of ideological mixing. In recent congressional testimony, for example, FBI Director Christopher Wray described extremists who hold a "weird hodgepodge blend of ideologies," noting that this trend is producing challenges in "trying to unpack what are often sort of incoherent belief systems, combined with kind of personal grievances." Other government officials and private-sector researchers have used a variety of different terms to discuss the same phenomenon, including ideological mixing and ideology à la carte. While government officials and experts have highlighted the particular challenges that this phenomenon poses for law enforcement and prevention practitioners, the trend as a whole is insufficiently conceptualized and lacks a framework for understanding distinct elements within.

Recognizing the reality and urgency of this challenge, we introduce the term "composite violent extremism" (CoVE) and provide an accompanying typology as a mechanism for more rigorously conceptualizing violent extremists who defy neat categorization.

The CoVE framework addresses a number of shortcomings in current efforts to identify and label ideologically complex violent extremists. First, the metaphor of the salad bar does not accurately characterize all individuals who fit the trend and perhaps is not even accurate for a majority of them, as the salad bar metaphor implies intentionality on the extremists' part. At a salad bar, people select ingredients with some level of care, only in rare instances ending up with food or other objects in their salad that they never intended. But it is possible that for many extremists, the mixing of ideologies and grievances is less intentional than the term suggests. The deluge of information in today's online environment, and particularly in the social media space, may mean that people are shaped by the information rather than intentionally selecting certain ideas. For instance, ideological mixing might occur in part because of the illusory truth effect: When people are exposed to something over and over, they are more likely to believe that it's true. Exposure to multiple toxic online cultures and message repetition that plays on previously held grievances or ideas might facilitate mixing in a far less deliberate way than the salad bar metaphor implies.

Second, and more important, salad bar extremism lacks a widely accepted definition or a publicly available conceptual framework for understanding cases that may be categorized this way. The same is true of other synonymous terms and concepts, such as ideological mixing. Absent such conceptualization, these labels become catch-all concepts that are poorly defined and thus encompass myriad individuals who are, in reality, not alike. The lack of ability to disaggregate individuals who fit the salad bar extremism concept presents difficulties for analytic, prevention, and detection efforts. Better categorization might reveal different patterns of behavior, unique risk factors, or trends in radicalization that would be invisible if every extremist who held any shade of ideological mixing was simply lumped together under one term.

Due to these intellectual gaps, we undertook a broad examination of ideologically ambiguous violent extremists, arriving at CoVE terminology as a replacement for the salad bar metaphor. But whatever term is employed to describe violent extremists that do not fit old ideological patterns, our more important contribution is the typology we provide to classify today's "weird hodgepodge" extremists. This conceptual framework provides a coherent model for understanding cases that might otherwise be poorly categorized or under-examined and lays a foundation for further research into this evolving threat.

The Composite Violent Extremism (CoVE) Framework

Composite violent extremists are violent extremists whose worldview appears to be composed of multiple distinct ideologies, sentiments, grievances, and fixations. The word "composite" denotes something made up of various parts or elements, thus encompassing the core of the salad bar metaphor without suggesting particular characteristics of the radicalization process (for example, that the mix of ideologies and grievances that the extremists have are selected with intentionality).

In creating this typology and situating cases within it, we evaluated discernible ideologies, prejudices, grievances, and fixations that an attacker expressed, and further attempted to evaluate how central an expressed belief was to an attacker's worldview. We assessed the centrality of a belief by analyzing how frequently an attacker expressed that belief, the attacker's connections to groups or individuals adhering to a given ideology, individual self-identification with a particular ideological movement, and whether the attacker explicitly expressed ideological motivations.

The work we undertook in categorizing attackers led us to conclude that ideological amalgamation happens in multiple ways and that four primary buckets can be used to classify extremists under the CoVE framework: *ambiguous*, *mixed*, *fused*, and *convergent* (Figure 1).

The first category of CoVE, which we term *ambiguous*, encompasses individuals who draw on a variety of disparate prejudices and grievances but do not adhere to a discernible ideological framework. Violent extremists who fit this category include Frank James, who wounded 29 people in a shooting on the Brooklyn subway in April 2022, and Ethan Miller, the Safeway attacker in Bend, Oregon. Although Frank





James posted hundreds of videos airing a variety of prejudices, grievances, and conspiracy theories—including expressing anti-U.S. sentiments, political grievances, and bigoted views about white people, Black people, Jews, and Latinos—SITE Intelligence [concluded](#) that none of his views “reflect any distinct extremist movement.” Similarly, Safeway shooter [Ethan Miller](#) claimed inspiration from the 1999 Columbine school shooting, expressed a range of misogynistic and racist sentiments, and aired various grievances related to the coronavirus. But he does not neatly fit into any ideological category. For both men, there was no clear expression of cohesive, discernible ideologies, though they articulated a range of sentiments that motivated their attacks. Ambiguous cases raise the thorniest questions about whether they should be categorized as violent extremism at all, as they are by definition the cases most lacking in discernible ideology. While one might question the framework’s ambiguous category for this reason, we think this point underscores the category’s importance: Inclusion of the ambiguous category in the framework reduces the risk of overlooking violent extremist cases that closely resemble non-ideological mass killers.

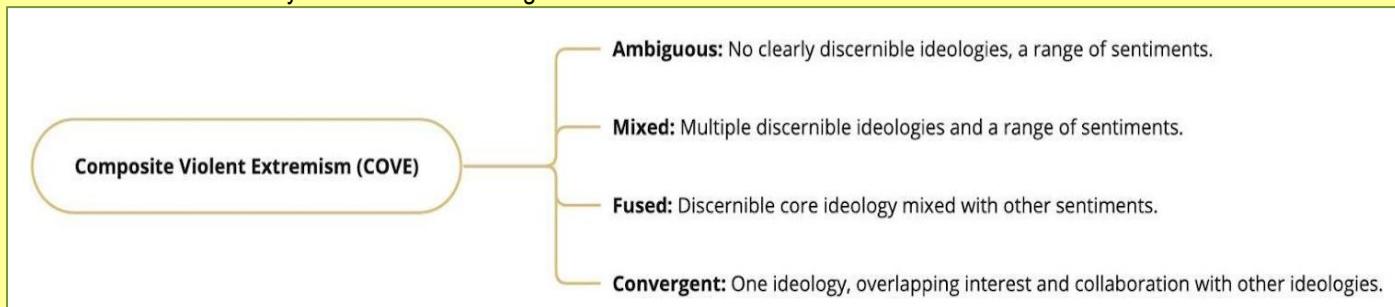


Figure 1. CoVE typology.

The second and third categories, mixed and fused, describe attackers who fit into existing ideological categories, such as white supremacist or jihadist, but also express other ideologies or sentiments that complicate placing them into only a single category. The *mixed* category applies to violent extremists who hold multiple different ideologies on relatively equal levels. For example, Zale Thompson, who attacked a group of New York City police officers with a hatchet in October 2014, drew motivation and inspiration from both [black separatism and jihadism](#). Both Black separatism and jihadism are coherent ideologies. We classify Thompson as fitting CoVe’s mixed category because it was not clear that one of these ideologies primarily influenced him. Rather, both apparently had a significant effect on his worldview and identity. Including the mixed category in the CoVE framework reduces the risk that such cases will be inappropriately grouped into a single ideological category and also allows for the identification of potential synergies between different extremist ideologies. The *fused* category describes violent extremists who are oriented primarily around a single core ideology but also express sentiments associated with other ideologies. For instance, Jack Reed, convicted in Britain in November 2019 of six terrorist offenses, fused satanism and interest in Columbine with his neo-Nazi ideology. Reed’s embrace of neo-Nazism was clear from his [journal](#), where he drew Nazi symbols and expressed admiration for Hitler. He also supported the British neo-Nazi group National Action. However, he also showed [interest](#) in satanism, describing his satanic beliefs on an online forum and referencing the esoteric satanist group Order of Nine Angles in his journal. He also repeatedly searched online for content about the Columbine shooting and repeatedly viewed content related to Anders Brevik, the perpetrator of the 2011 Norway terrorist attacks that claimed 77 lives. Compared to Thompson, Reed is less ideologically complex and possesses a core ideology. However, his interests in satanism and Columbine complicate the picture and differentiate him from your average neo-Nazi. We thus coded him as fused. The fused category ensures that the role of extremists’ dominant ideology, when they have one, is taken into account. This reduces the risk, which exists in grouping such incidents into catch-all categories like salad bar extremism, of inadvertently playing down the threat posed by broader violent extremist movements like white supremacism. *Convergent*, the final category of CoVE, is for individuals who embody the adage “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” This category applies when individuals or groups espousing different ideologies choose to cooperate or collaborate but do not adopt one another’s outlook. Each party maintains its own beliefs but agrees to work with those who hold fundamentally different beliefs but possess overlapping interests. One example of convergence in our dataset is the case of Michael Solomon and Benjamin Teeter, two self-proclaimed members of the Boogaloo Bois, a U.S.-based anti-government movement, who agreed to sell weapons to an individual they believed was a member of the terrorist organization Hamas. They did not convert to Islam nor did they join Hamas. Rather, the partnership was forged over shared anti-U.S. sentiments and a pragmatic money-making scheme. While the convergent category applies only in cases where individuals holding different beliefs choose to work together, it is indicative of a broader phenomenon of extremists expressing support for attacks carried out by violent extremists with different ideologies. As one small example of this broader trend, an Islamic State supporter who was planning to attack a synagogue claimed [inspiration](#) from the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, which





was carried out by a white supremacist. The attack was inspirational for him based on shared antisemitic beliefs. Including the convergent category in the CoVE framework ensures that cases of cross-ideological cooperation are not ignored in the examination of the broader trend we describe simply due to their lack of ideological blending. While CoVE can help to explain and categorize a broad range of violent extremists, it does not account for attackers who do not appear to adhere to an ideology, a prejudice, or a grievance, even if they otherwise seem to fit the characteristics of ideologically motivated attackers. For example, the July 4 Highland Park shooter displayed [extreme interest in violence](#) but did not express a specific extremist ideology, prejudice, or grievance.

The Implications of the Composite Violent Extremism Framework

The CoVE framework is intended to help practitioners and scholars conceptualize a change in ideologically motivated threats that the United States' top law enforcement officials have identified as concerning and difficult to understand. CoVE fills a definitional and conceptual gap, providing greater clarity on a topic that has gained significant attention in recent years. This typology has implications for the full range of domestically focused counterterrorism efforts, including tracking overarching trends, prevention, deradicalization/disengagement efforts, the posture of law enforcement, and research efforts that can inform policy.

First, this typology will enable efforts to track important shifts in idiosyncratic violent extremism over time. The simple observation that, for example, “salad bar extremism is increasing” is not sufficiently granular to allow practitioners to understand specific radicalization dynamics. The four categories we delineate make clear that there are significant differences among the various extremists who have been classified under the “salad bar” label and enable analysts and scholars to track trends over time. These important differences among violent extremists have practical consequence:

- **Prevention efforts.** A range of ideologies, sentiments, grievances, and vulnerability factors can influence people's propensity to conduct an act of violence across the four categories of CoVE. Given that prevention efforts are apparently [most effective](#) when they are as individualized as is practical and can speak directly to relationships, grievances, and the individual's ideologies, a more granular understanding of the evolving radicalization cocktail could render prevention efforts more effective. Further, CoVE's categories could allow for greater tracking of the most effective methodological approaches for each subtype.
- **Deradicalization and disengagement.** As is the case for attempts to prevent people from succumbing to violent extremism in the first place, a more granular understanding of applicable drivers is important for disengagement and deradicalization efforts for individuals already involved in extremist activities. Previous deradicalization efforts have [struggled](#) to account for individual motivating factors and the ways they interact with an extremist's beliefs. Given the complex way it conceptualizes ideological makeup and the unique accounting it provides of the full range of a person's grievances, the CoVE framework could be fruitful for methodological development and evaluation for different types of attackers. For example, ideological factors play a very different role across the range of CoVE subtypes. The lack of a clear core ideology makes an extremist in the *ambiguous* category substantively different from a *fused* extremist, who in many (though not all) important ways resembles more traditional conceptions of an extremist with a defined core belief system. As such, effective deradicalization/disengagement efforts for individuals in these two categories will not look the same. This framework importantly provides a means of program evaluation based on *how* different individuals hold ideologies, prejudices, and grievances, not just *what* ideology they hold.
- **Law enforcement.** The manner in which the CoVE framework facilitates consideration of the totality of an individual's ideological and grievance profile intersects in meaningful ways with law enforcement efforts, including efforts to protect potential targets of violence. For example, a mixed extremist who holds both radical environmentalist and extreme misogynist views might consider attacking both a gas pipeline (a potential eco-terrorist target) and a women's college (a potential target for misogynistic violence). Further, holding composite extremist views may influence the scope of events that could precipitate violent acts. The greater the number of ideologies, prejudices, or grievances, the more potential triggers for violence. Thus, the ideological confusion of an *ambiguous* extremist might broaden the range of triggers or targets considerably. In contrast, a *fused* extremist with one core ideology combined with other sentiments might have a narrower range—albeit potentially still broader than if that person held just one ideology, with the extremist's sentiments generally aligning with that ideological perspective. For instance, if a neo-Nazi also is an adherent of QAnon, that individual presents two vectors for attacks: The individual can be triggered to violence in response to a motivation rooted in neo-Nazism or a QAnon motivation. That individual could perpetrate violence in response to an instance of perceived government overreach—a QAnon trigger—presenting an additional vector for attack than if the person held only neo-Nazi beliefs. For an ambiguous attacker holding four or five different distinct prejudices, there could be even more possible triggers.





- **Policy research.** As noted, the CoVE framework can drive research efforts that can inform policy. For example, the framework can assist efforts to understand how changes in the information environment are altering ideological formation and giving birth to new radicalization patterns. If cases involving ambiguous extremists are increasing but fused attackers seem to be decreasing, it would be important to understand that phenomenon specifically and conduct targeted research into potential causes. Resulting research will have implications for a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners, social media companies, mental health professionals, and civil society leaders.

As instances of ideologically motivated violence continue to make headlines, the concept of composite violent extremism highlights the continuing evolution of the face of violent extremism. CoVE can be a framework for understanding and classifying a broader range of ideological actors, and it can aid efforts to tailor prevention and detection efforts to combat this growing threat.

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Andrew Zammit is an academic researcher on terrorism and security. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from Monash University and is a postdoctoral research fellow at Victoria University (Australia), employed on projects receiving support from Australian defense and counterterrorism agencies. Zammit consults part time for Valens Global.

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European Parliament Declares Russia A State Sponsor of Terrorism

Source: <https://tsarizm.com/news/eastern-europe/2022/11/25/european-parliament-declares-russia-a-state-sponsor-of-terrorism/>



... but USA has a different opinion!



Nov 25 – On Wednesday, the European Parliament declared that **Russia is committing war crimes in its war against Ukraine and that it has used “means of terrorism,” which has led to Russia being officially declared a state sponsor of terrorism**, according to Inkerman. In response to the new classification, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have insisted on furthering the deliberate isolation of Russia. The EU will also take measures to close and ban all Russian state-affiliated institutions in the EU that are spreading propaganda, and it will be preparing a ninth sanctions package against Moscow. The classification of Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism comes as the war in Ukraine has seen the recent withdrawal of Russian troops from the city of Kherson and the false accusations of Russia attacking Poland when an errant Ukrainian air-defense missile landed on the Polish border and killed 2 people last week.

Nov 25 – On Wednesday, the European Parliament declared that **Russia is committing war crimes in its war against Ukraine and that it has used “means of terrorism,” which has led to Russia being officially declared a state sponsor of terrorism**, according to Inkerman. In response to the new classification, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have insisted on furthering the deliberate isolation of Russia. The EU will also take measures to close and ban all Russian state-affiliated institutions in the EU that are spreading propaganda, and it will be preparing a ninth sanctions package against Moscow. The classification of Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism comes as the war in Ukraine has seen the recent withdrawal of Russian troops from the city of Kherson and the false accusations of Russia attacking Poland when an errant Ukrainian air-defense missile landed on the Polish border and killed 2 people last week.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Did WWI/WWII Germany vote for the classification as well?

On This Day: Mumbai terrorist attacks kill 175 people

Source: <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-723429>

Nov 26 – 14 years ago, on November 26, 2008, the **Mumbai terrorist attacks** began, a series of attacks conducted by an Islamist terrorist organization from Pakistan, that killed 175 people, including nine terrorists, and left over 300 people wounded.

The terrorist attacks

Ten members of **Lashkar-e-Taiba**, an Islamist terrorist organization from Pakistan, carried out 12 shooting and bombing attacks throughout Mumbai for four days beginning on November 26.





The first of the attacks occurred at the historic railway station Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT). It was attacked by two gunmen, who were later identified as Ismail Khan and Ajmal Kasab, according to multiple news sites.

The attacks started around 9:30 p.m. local time when the two gunmen walked to the passenger hall and opened fire with their AK-47 rifles, killing 58 people and injuring 104.

Vishnu Fattaram Zende, a railway announcer, alerted the passengers to leave the station immediately, which saved many lives.

The gunmen fled the railway, firing at police officers and pedestrians on the street, resulting in eight officers being killed. As they were fleeing, they passed a police station. The police inside knew that they were outgunned by the heavily armed terrorists, so the police officers secured the gates and turned off the lights at the station instead of confronting the terrorists.

The attackers tried to attack Cama Hospital but the hospital staff was notified before so they locked up the whole hospital.

Police Chief Hemant Karkare led a team from the Mumbai Anti-Terrorist Squad in pursuit of the gunmen. Their vehicle reached the gunmen who in return fired at the vehicle, killing all but one officer who was severely wounded. The gunmen then took the police vehicle and later abandoned it and stole a different car.

They ran into a police roadblock which resulted in a gunfight. Khan was killed and Kasab was wounded. A police officer was killed while trying to disarm Kasab after he was wounded. Kasab was then arrested.

Another one of the first attacks was at a popular restaurant and bar in South Mumbai, Leopold Cafe. Two attackers opened fire on the cafe killing ten people, including foreigners.

There were also two explosions in taxis caused by timer bombs during the same time as the two shootings. The first one occurred at Vile Parle, which killed the driver and a passenger. The second one happened at Wadi Bunder, killing three people, including the driver, and injuring about 15 people.

The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and the Oberoi Trident were also targeted. There were six explosions reported at the Taj Hotel, one in the lobby, two in the elevators, three in the Hotel's restaurant and one at the Oberoi Trident. Firefighters rescued 200 hostages from windows using ladders.

A number of European Parliament Committee on International Trade delegates were guests at the Taj Hotel when it was attacked, but thankfully, none were hurt.





Several residents were held hostage by two attackers at the [Mumbai Chabad House, Nariman House](#). Police evacuated surrounding buildings and exchanged fire with the attackers, wounding one.

Throughout the first day, [nine hostages were rescued](#). NSG commandos from Delhi stormed the Chabad house. After a long day of fighting, one NSG commando was killed as well as the two terrorists. [Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka Holtzberg](#) who was six months pregnant were both murdered as well as four other hostages.





The aftermath and investigations

In July 2009, Pakistani authorities confirmed that Lashkar-e-Taiba organized the attacks from their camps in Karachi and Thatta. Mumbai police identified 37 suspects, including two Pakistani officers, for allegedly being involved in plotting the attacks.

On October 3, 2009, Pakistani-born, US citizen David Coleman Headly, born Daood Sayed Gilani, was arrested in Chicago. He was found to have made several trips to India prior to the attacks and had gathered videos and pictures, scouting the areas as well as gathering GPS information on behalf of the attackers, according to *The Indian Express*.

According to CNN, not even ten days later, former Pakistani military doctor and Canadian citizen, Tahawwur Hussain Rana was arrested in Chicago.

March 18, 2010, Headly pleaded guilty to the charges and on January 24, 2013, he was sentenced to 35 years in prison. December 2020, he received a pardon from a Mumbai court in exchange for "detailed testimony regarding Lashkar-e-Taiba and the attacks," according to CNN.



Notable people commemorating the Mumbai terrorist attacks

On early Saturday morning, Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrote on his Twitter, "On the 14th anniversary of the Mumbai terrorist attacks, we stand in solidarity with the people of India and the city of Mumbai. We express our deep condolences to the families and friends of the victims lost in this act of cruelty, including six American citizens."

"As we mark 14 years since the horrific attacks on November 26, we join people in India - and around the world - in mourning the lives lost," Blinken said in a short two-minute clip of a meeting with him and Minister Jaishankar, talking about the attacks. "141 Indians, six Americans. And victims from 15 other countries, from every region of the world. As well as many Mumbaikars, Americans and others wounded - with scars visible and invisible. We stand in solidarity with the people of India and all nations that lost people on that day.

"But we must do more than mourn. We have a responsibility to the victims and people everywhere, to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks, including their masterminds. That's what the United States has been working to do, together with India and other partners, for the last 14 years. Because when we allow the architects of these attacks to go unpunished, we send a message to terrorists everywhere



that their heinous crimes will be tolerated. Many members of the Security Council, including the United States, have adopted our own sanctions against the terrorists behind these attacks.

"But our accountability efforts are more effective when we act together, which is why we've worked with India to put forward nominations to designate several terrorists through the UN 1267 Committee. All relevant parties should support these designations; no nation should stand in their way. Beyond ensuring full accountability for 26/11, we also have a responsibility to prevent future attacks like it. That requires addressing new and emerging threats, such as terrorists' increasing abuse of technologies and the Internet to finance and plan attacks, store assets and radicalize and recruit members."

"The United States is working with the private sector to address these vulnerabilities - from getting financial technology companies to enhance and enforce policies aimed at preventing their illicit use - to helping platforms ensure they're not hosting terrorist content and spreading hate," he continues. "But we can't do it alone and we're ready to work with all governments, multilateral bodies and companies in this effort."

"As we reflect on the immeasurable loss of 26/11, let it be a reminder to all of us of our unfinished work in holding accountable the perpetrators of its horrors and of averting future terrorist attacks like it, on any of our people, anywhere," he wrapped up.

"On the anniversary of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, the nation remembers with gratitude all those we lost," Indian President Rashtrapati Bhavan wrote on her Twitter. "We share the enduring pain of their loved ones and families. Nation pay homage to the security personnel who fought valiantly and made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty."

India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar, remembering the victims, wrote on his Twitter, "Terrorism threatens humanity. Today on 26/11, the world joins India in remembering its victims. Those who planned and oversaw this attack must be brought to justice. We owe this to every victim of terrorism around the world."

"On November 26, 2008, 10 terrorists carried out the horrific Mumbai attacks murdering 166 people and wounding 293," StandWithUs wrote on Twitter. "14 years later we remember the victims. Our thoughts are with all those who were affected by this despicable act of evil. Today, we stand in solidarity with India."

Heroes are not only human!





Australia reduces national terrorism threat to 'possible'

Source: <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-al-qaida-nationalism-middle-east-government-and-politics-4340b85abcf1c0e56db3c5ef8b37dd92>



Nov 28 — Australia's terrorism threat level has been downgraded from "probable" to "possible" for the first time since 2014, the head of the main domestic spy agency said Monday.

The defeat of the Islamic State group in battle in the Middle East and an ineffective al-Qaida propaganda machine failing to connect with Western youth has resulted in fewer extremists in Australia, Australian Security Intelligence Organization Director-General Mike Burgess said.

"This does not mean the threat is extinguished," Burgess said.

"It remains plausible that someone will die at the hands of a terrorist in Australia within the next 12 months," he added.

However, there have been increases in radical nationalism and right-wing extremist ideology in Australia in the past couple of years, Burgess said.

"Individuals are still fantasizing about killing other Australians, still spouting their hateful ideologies in chat rooms, still honing their capabilities by researching bomb-making and training with weapons," Burgess said.

There have been 11 terrorist attacks and another 21 plots have been disrupted since the threat assessment was elevated from "possible" to "probable" in 2014, he said. Half of the foiled plots were in the first two years of the upgraded risk when the Islamic State group was more prominent.



EDITOR'S COMMENT: Are Australians aware of what each level means for them and their daily life and work activities? No they are not and nobody is interested to fill this gap in civil defense ...

Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Beyond the Sandpit

By Katja Theodorakis

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221128-countering-terrorism-and-violent-extremism-beyond-the-sandpit>

Nov 28 – Many counterterrorism experts and observers have long said that one of the key failings of the post-9/11 era was a lack of a cohesive, overarching strategic concept. Research indicates that short-term operational and tactical planning can dominate policy and security risk management at the expense of future scenario planning.

To be sure, a rigorous approach to counterterrorism as a security practice will always be needed, even as terrorist activity, and its immediate relevance in relation to other geostrategic and national security threats, peaks and dips. However, we need also to analyse events and issues through effective strategic thinking in counterterrorism, taking us beyond the more traditional focus on tactical innovation, organisational variations and changes in the modus operandi of terror groups.

That is why ASPI's 2022 counterterrorism yearbook zooms out to the wider strategic horizon. One of the lessons we've learned during the past 20 years is that what determines a turn to violence doesn't only come down to individual trajectories and the appeal of ideology in conjunction with structural variables but interacts with a much broader enabling environment. Several contributions in the yearbook highlight this.

For most of the past two decades, terrorism and extremism were largely seen as the domain of a foreign 'other'. Even when talking about 'homegrown jihadis', extremist ideological motivations were generally ascribed to sources not only culturally different, but in direct opposition to our national identity and values, however abstractly defined.

If we want a counterterrorism and counterextremism approach that integrates with and complements a long-term, purposefully pursued national security policy framework, we need to move the





discussion [beyond what we did in the sandpit](#). Challenges today are increasingly systemic, amorphous and endemic. This is a much more uncomfortable, politically difficult reality.

Responsive policymaking in this environment—especially at a time of heightened strategic competition—requires ongoing recognition of the dilemmas and complexities inherent in countering terrorism and extremism. For instance, as one chapter in our yearbook argues, trust in government is crucial for preventing extremism and combating the activities of terrorists—of all persuasions—and delegitimising their actions in the eyes of the community.

Our approaches and policy measures must be built on a clearer distinction between security and societal outcomes, while at the same time factoring in the possible impact of geopolitical forces on domestic policies. We're witnessing the proliferation of anti-democratic ideas as hate speech, hate crimes and politically motivated violence become more prominent in the evolving landscape internationally.

We have to be cognisant of lessons from the 6 January US Capitol attack, and from Canada's, New Zealand's and Australia's various experiences with 'freedom convoys' converging on national parliaments.

Overall, these events highlight that efforts to counter extremism and build resilience can't focus just on specific extremist fringes. Rather than considering the ability to recognise and withstand the appeal of anti-democratic ideas as a skill needed by individuals identified as 'vulnerable', or as a commitment by certain at-risk communities, the task takes on a fuller meaning as the threat changes and shifts.

As well as the 'classic' counterterrorism and counterextremism topics related to jihadism, a successful approach to combating terrorism requires research, commentary and dialogue on other (violent) contestations of democracy. This is certainly the approach that ASPI's reoriented counterterrorism program is taking.

This broadened focus involves overlapping forms of ideological extremism, such as anti-government and conspiracy extremism, militant patriot and sovereign citizen movements, and other anti-pluralist discourse, gender-based hate and novel expressions of anti-Semitism, including how these developments are affected by evolving information and propaganda dynamics in a changing strategic environment.

We need a forward-looking, integrative approach that views countering terrorism and extremism as enduring political and societal challenges. If we define resilience as the ability to withstand extremist ideas through a commitment to Australian democracy and identity, we need to allow for contestability—that is, the ability to also question the meaning and application of national values, particularly in times of crisis or when the practice of democracy has polarising or exclusionary effects.

Keeping the strategic effects on democracy and the rules-based international order in centre view is fundamental to a comprehensive, long-term response in harmony with broader national and foreign policy objectives.

In terms of what lies ahead on the threat landscape, we must continually ask ourselves whether our approaches to countering terrorism and extremism are directed by a clear understanding of the distinction between the desired end state and the ways and means to get there.

Adapting to changed times means aligning a range of security priorities and other national objectives so they complement each other, rather than allowing the driving logic of one policy field or strand of national power to have adverse effects on another.

Going beyond the sandpit is therefore about recognising the need to stake out new strategic parameters and ensuring that the right questions are driving our analysis and policymaking.

Katja Theodorakis heads ASPI's counterterrorism program (Australia).

Workplace Killers: People Kill Their Colleagues for Different Reasons Than Other Shooters

By Craig Jackson and Laura Robinson

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221128-workplace-killers-people-kill-their-colleagues-for-different-reasons-than-other-shooters>

Nov 28 – At 10.12 pm on November 23, an overnight team leader at a Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, opened fire on colleagues in the crew room. The 31-year-old perpetrator [killed six and injured at least six more](#) before killing himself.

The violence was directed towards fellow workers – no customers were targeted – but it is not yet known if any were targeted specifically. This was the 606th gun attack in the US in 2022 where at least four others were [shot in a single incident](#).





Workplace mass shootings (WMS) are undertaken by attackers who either work or worked for an organization where the attack occurs. They are different from mass shootings which occur at workplaces unrelated to attackers or where the perpetrators are (disgruntled) customers. WMS have happened in pretty much all sectors in the US: uniformed services, breweries, construction, distribution, offices, software engineering, education and power plants.

Most notoriously, there were several attacks in the 1980s and 1990s on sites operated by the US Postal Service (USPS). More than 20 incidents of “workplace rage” by USPS workers occurred between 1970 and 1997 resulting in [more than 60 deaths](#) although the commonly used term “going postal” was effectively debunked when it was found USPS staff were statistically no more likely to commit WMS than staff in other sectors. The most lethal USPS incident [was at Edmond, Oklahoma, in 1986](#), when a disgruntled USPS employee shot and killed 14 colleagues before killing himself.

US workplaces [became safer](#) in the 1990s and 2000s – workplace murder rates dropped by 50% over that period. But despite active policing measures, improved workplace security and improvements in public health and social care, workplace mass shootings are increasing.

A study of [44 workplace shootings](#) from 1986-2011 shows **such attacks often differ from other public mass shootings**. They are rarely racially motivated, they are not motivated by desires for infamy and are rarely committed due to faith or ideology.

Workplace attacks are quite homogeneous in motive. They are mostly [attributed to revenge](#) and often derived from attackers' perceptions of being denied “organizational justice” and being treated unfairly. Figures show that more than half of WMS are [perpetrated by current employees](#) with less than 25% of attackers having been in post less than a year. In almost 50% of cases, attackers left employment but returned months later to “settle scores”.

Many other mass shootings occur at commercial premises perpetrated by disgruntled customers or clients, rather than staff. Since 2006 there have been 25 mass shootings at US commercial locations that were not perpetrated by employees or former employees. The US [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) shows that in 2018 alone, 351 people were killed in workplaces by firearms.

[FBI data](#) from 2000-13 showed 45% of US mass shootings occurred on commercial premises. That's nearly twice as many as in schools and campuses (24%). This flies in the face of public perceptions – probably thanks to [biases in media coverage](#) – that school shootings are the single biggest type of mass shooting incident.

Data on mass shootings from [Mother Jones magazine](#) covering 2006-22 (defining a mass shooting as a minimum of three deaths excluding the shooter, in public places) shows there were 35 WMS in the US, with 214 deaths. This accounts for roughly 26% of the 802 deaths from all mass shootings in the same period. In the same period, there were 152 deaths from 13 school shootings.

Workplace Heartbreak

Workplace mass shootings are low-frequency yet highly impacting events that haunt companies and personnel for decades. John Furner, [Walmart US president and CEO](#), said the Chesapeake shooting “was exceptionally tragic because the assailant was an employee. We feel tragedies like this personally and deeply ... The entire Walmart family is heartbroken.”

In workplace attacks, victims are generally indiscriminately chosen – although shooters have a bias for targeting people they had grudges with (managers, supervisors, human resources) before widening out to coworkers or customers who may be present. [FBI data](#) shows such targeting happens in 60% of WMS cases.

Other studies found attackers to typically be [white \(70%\) and male \(95%-97%\)](#). Perpetrators were [equally likely](#) to be blue-collar or managerial workers, with an average age under 40 years.

Attackers tend to have antisocial tendencies, but they are [rarely mentally ill](#) and the vast majority are free from drug or substance misuse habits. Some [studies suggest](#) attackers may be uptight “grievance collectors” who find it hard to move on.

[FBI records](#) of cases where attacker's grievances were identified found the most common triggers (in 49% of cases) were interpersonal workplace difficulties, or disciplinary action being taken against the shooters. The data shows the presence of significant acute stressors is common in many shortly before committing their attacks. These often include financial strain, conflicts with friends or family, marital problems and – to a lesser extent – substance misuse, sexual frustration and criminal or civil problems.

Workplace attackers tend not to overarm themselves and take fewer weapons with them compared with other types of attackers – other types of mass shooters often take as many as 11 firearms in their attacks. These killers usually carry an [average of three weapons](#), which means that the resultant injuries and deaths may be lower than in other mass shootings.

But workplace shooters are similar to other mass killers in that they are as likely to display [“leakage behavior”](#) – intentionally or unintentionally giving clues to any feelings that may signal an impending violent act. These are often subtle threats, boasts, innuendos, predictions or ultimatums either in person, via text messages or social media posts. In more than 60% of workplace attacks, at least one other coworker is usually [aware of the attacker's plans](#).

Mass shootings reached an [unprecedented high in 2020](#) – as did firearm sales. And the precarious nature of employment and perceived [economic downturn](#) over the next two years for most economies, means the





number of disgruntled and vengeful employees may increase. Worryingly, most workplaces remain soft targets, with little defense against attackers.

Research into the background characteristics of such attackers and the role of workplace interactions in their pathways to violence will help reveal more about this often overlooked classification of a mass shooter. But fairer workplaces, where equitable treatment is visible for all staff, will save more working lives than any “[run, hide, fight](#)” campaign could possibly do.

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New Evolving Terrorist Threats Intersect with ‘Oldest Hatred’

By Amy Mintz

Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/new-evolving-terrorist-threats-intersect-with-oldest-hatred/>



Surveillance video at the Chabad of Poway shows shooter John T. Earnest at the synagogue on April 27, 2019. (San Diego Superior Court)

Nov 28 – Since the inception of the Department of Homeland Security in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the threats and targets of terrorism have changed drastically. The attack on the World Trade Center took place within what Glenn E. Robinson, author of *Global Jihad: A Brief History*, termed the “second wave of global jihad” when emphasis was placed on mass casualties and targets were mostly iconic symbols of western dominance, cities and transportation systems.[\[1\]](#) Terrorist attacks and targeted violence now strike society anywhere and everywhere – in schools and the workplace, and in places of worship, festivities, shopping and

more.

Over the years, the once-main focal point on mostly foreign terrorists evolved with the arrival of the homegrown violent extremist (located in the United States but radicalized by foreign terrorism ideology) and now with the rise of domestic violent extremism (DVE), fueled by ideologies of hate and anti-government sentiment among others. Now terrorism attacks in the U.S. come from loosely organized groups, networks and lone actors in addition to international terrorist organizations with established chain of command and control structures.

As reported by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), two decades after the largest terrorist attack in history, Salafi-Jihadist terrorism is declining, accounting for only 5 percent of terrorism attacks in 2020[\[2\]](#), while domestic terrorism linked to violent far-right and far-left extremism is increasing. In 2020, nearly 40 percent of all domestic terrorist attacks were against government, military and law enforcement, followed by ‘soft targets’ of demonstrators and private individuals.

The White House identified the two most dangerous domestic terrorism threats as stemming from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism (REMVE) and from anti-government sentiments among others recognized by the FBI and DHS as significant national security threats. While the very name behind the acronym itself, REMVE, points to extremism based on racial or ethnic bias, both political and religious justifications are often intertwined to support these ideologies and crimes. Though myriad online communities and their extremist ideologies are wide-ranging, a common thread that runs through many is antisemitism that pulls from Nazi propaganda, according to the State Department, which has tracked transnational connections among REMVE groups and individuals.[\[3\]](#)

There is also a distinction of antisemitism within REMVE that has been made, which was articulated by Beth Israel Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker about Malik Faisal Akram, the terrorist who attacked the Texas synagogue in January 2022. He “literally thought that Jews control the world,” believing that speaking to a rabbi in New York would authorize the release of a Pakistani woman held for attempted murder at a nearby facility in Fort Worth. [\[4\]](#)

The FBI has reported that hate crimes against the Jewish community make up over half of all religious-based crimes, [\[5\]](#) even though Jews make up only 2 percent of the U.S. population. Within the U.S. alone,





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assaults on Jews increased 167 percent since last year, occurring in cities from Los Angeles to the Las Vegas strip to Times Square, while antisemitic incidents surpassed record highs in 2021 – up 34 percent from the year before [6].

The wave of antisemitism that has swelled across the nation is also felt on college campuses. The DNI [7] has issued reports on the significant number of hate crimes and assaults that have taken place at university campuses as well as K-12 schools. A survey showed that 95 percent of Jewish college students and recent alumni said antisemitism is an issue, and three of four respondents called it a “very serious problem” [8]. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) [9] reported that between June 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022, 359 antisemitic incidents occurred on U.S. college campuses in the form of assaults, harassment, offensive comments, antisemitic flyers, and more, including acts of vandalism such as spray-painted and carved swastika hate crimes.

While domestic terrorist attacks and hate crimes may overlap in some aspects (as hate crimes may involve violence or threats thereof and may allude to involving extreme ideologies), distinctions are drawn between the intentions and motivations behind these acts; although in certain cases, an act could be considered both. Moreover, there are key distinguishing factors between the two regarding federal criminal statutes: these exist for hate crimes to be charged with established penalties for those convicted, whereas domestic terrorism may only be “an element of other federal crimes or provide an enhanced sentence.” [10]

Previous to the current rise of domestic terrorism and hate crimes, the long dark history of antisemitism goes back hundreds of years. It has been called the “oldest hatred” with discrimination manifesting itself in different ways over the centuries along racial, ethnic and religious biases long before the Holocaust, the world’s deadliest genocide that killed two-thirds of the Jewish population in Europe. The past has shown us how hate and terrorism change and evolve as time marches through history. The different waves of global jihad that began when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 merge together as the ‘religious wave’ of terrorism, and are preceded by many other distinct waves of terrorism, such as the ‘anarchist wave’ that began in the 1880s, the ‘anti-colonial wave’ in the 1920s, and the ‘new left wave’ in the 1960s. Each of the waves defined by UCLA professor David Rapoport lasted approximately 40-45 years.

As the current era defined by Rapaport draws closer to its end, the next wave has been described by several, with an emphasis on technology as a driver, and no one ideology dominating over others. The current wave we enter further into is a mix of many different extremist views: not all fit neatly into global jihadism, REMVE or anti-government sentiments, and some forms are driven by ideologies far different from what preceding waves of terrorism have shown us.

Sources

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[4] See Yair Rosenberg, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/01/texas-synagogue-anti-semitism-conspiracy-theory/621286/>

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[8] See Fox News, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/antisemitism-college-campuses-rising-students>

[9] See ADL, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/anti-israel-activism-us-campuses-2021-2022>

[10] See Congressional Research Service, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/terror/IN10299.pdf>

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Islamic State in Somalia: A 12 Month Outlook

By Alec Smith

Source: <https://greydynamics.com/islamic-state-in-somalia-a-12-month-outlook/>



A still from an IS Somalia propaganda video

Nov 29 – The Islamic State (IS) in the Horn of Africa conducts a low-intensity feud with Somalia's al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab. There are fresh concerns that the two rivals may have closer connections than previously acknowledged. Moreover, IS Somalia associates with Somali pirate groups and the Islamic State affiliate in Yemen. US combat personnel reportedly are driving the group back from several key towns in Puntland. US air strikes were essential in assisting the Puntland Security Forces. Between pressure from the United States and its rival insurgent groups, IS Somalia will find it difficult to expand its operational capacity and grow its ranks.

KJ-1: It is highly unlikely that al-Shabaab and IS Somalia will cooperate in the next 12 months.

- The US Department of Treasury issued a warning which highlighted the connection between IS Somalia and al-Shabaab [[source](#)].
- The Treasury Department alleges that IS Somalia and al-Shabaab share the same arms trafficking networks. They may cooperate in the procurement of weapons [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia aligns with the Islamic State affiliate in Yemen, as well as various elements engaged in piracy in the Horn of Africa [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia targeted its propaganda effort towards former al-Shabaab members. They made attempts to entice current Al Shabaab members accordingly [[source](#)].
- These propaganda efforts were successful in gaining several recruits from al-Shabaab as well as several field commanders [[source](#)].
- Al Shabaab's leadership reissued its proclamation of loyalty to al-Qaida and denounced the defections [[source](#)].
- A state of all out war was declared by al-Shabaab on IS Somalia in late 2018 [[source](#)].
- In 2018, IS Somalia could expand into parts of Somalia traditionally controlled by al-Shabaab, further inflaming the rivalry [[source](#)].
- Al-Shabaab was likely behind the execution of Mahad Maalin in Mogadishu in 2018. Maalin was the deputy leader of IS Somalia prior to his death [[source](#)].





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- There have been further clashes between IS Somalia and al-Shabaab in Mudug and near Dassan [[source](#)].

KJ-2: It is unlikely that IS Somalia will expand its operational activity in the next 12 months.

- IS Somalia plays on Somalia's clan networks to give the impression of widespread support amongst the public [[source](#)].
- Abdulqadir Mumin, the current emir of IS Somalia, is a member of the Ali Salebaan sub-clan. Support by the sub-clan directly links to the group's survival in Puntland [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia uses mob-style extortion tactics to raise funds from the local population in urban areas [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia attempted to expand its operations into southern Somalia. IS Somalia's and al-Shabaab's propaganda arms noted the attempted expansion [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia handles a large amount of the illicit arms trafficking in Puntland and is moving large amounts of weapons into Puntland from abroad [[source](#)].
- The Treasury department sanctioned several key individuals involved in the trafficking. These individuals include Abdirahman Fahiye (head of operations), Mohamed Ahmed Qahiye (head of intelligence) and Isse Mohamoud Yusuf, a go between for IS Somalia and Somali pirate groups. [[source](#)].
- Security forces in Puntland dealt a severe blow to IS Somalia cells in Bosaso. This forced the group to divert its activities south towards Mogadishu [[source](#)].
- The head of IS Somalia's southern branch is reportedly in custody of the Somali intelligence services [[source](#)].
- US airstrikes in Dari region killed Abdulhakim Dhuqub, IS Somalia's second in command [[source](#)].
- The Ethiopian security forces repelled cross border incursions by IS Somalia [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia's affiliate in Yemen lost much of its operational capacity in the last few years [[source](#)].
- The IS branch in Yemen acted as the facilitator for financial networks between IS Somalia and IS Khorasan Province (Afghanistan) [[source](#)].

KJ-3: There is a realistic probability that IS Somalia will increase recruitment in the next 12 months.

- IS Somalia can sustain a permanent presence in the highlands of Puntland, operating a training base there which acts as the command-and-control center for Islamic State – Central Africa Province [[source](#)].
- The ability of IS Somalia to operate in urban as opposed to rural areas indicates a greater capacity [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia released several recruitment videos in Amharic geared towards gaining recruits in Ethiopia. There are several recruits currently in IS Somalia from Ethiopia and Djibouti [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia established a new training center in the north of Puntland. The new camp, as well as an older one, are both used in propaganda videos throughout the last number of years [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia showed the ability to attract foreign fighters, most notably from Canada. Canadian national Yusuf al-Majeerteeni is believed to have directly joined IS Somalia from Canada [[source](#)].
- al-Majeerteeni issued a recorded message aimed at young men in the West, where he claimed that IS Somalia treats the locals of Puntland well and provides quality medical care [[source](#)].
- The FBI arrested three men in Michigan for attempting to travel to Somalia and join IS, demonstrating that videos like al-Majeerteeni's have appeal [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia can recuperate battlefield losses after US airstrikes targeted the group. Despite the loss of combatants, IS Somalia can "offset" those losses through recruitment [[source](#)].
- IS Somalia uses a network of clan-based ties in order to bolster its ranks and drive recruitment [[source](#)].
- They provide financial incentives to prospective recruits, potentially enticing unemployed young men into the ranks [[source](#)].

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Hostile references by ISIS and Al-Qaeda to the FIFA World Cup games in Qatar

Source: <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/hostile-references-by-isis-and-al-qaeda-to-the-fifa-world-cup-games-in-qatar/>

Highlights

- Official media channels of ISIS and Al-Qaeda show a hostile attitude towards the FIFA World Cup games which are currently being held in Qatar (November 20 – December 18, 2022). An editorial published in Al-Naba, ISIS's official weekly, called to act according to the



recommendation of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad and to remove the polytheists, Jews, and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Qaeda called on Muslims to boycott the event because it promotes obscenity and homosexuality in the Arabian Peninsula and warned Muslims not to watch it, attend it or promote it.

- About two weeks before the start of the games, messages encouraging terrorist activity during the World Cup games were posted on various accounts affiliated with ISIS on the Telegram channel. Among the messages that stood out were those calling for various types of attacks, including biological attacks, against citizens of countries of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS as revenge for their attacks against the organization.
- It should be noted that the main articles on behalf of ISIS and Al-Qaeda do not explicitly call for carrying out terrorist attacks during the World Cup. But there is a fear that operatives of these organizations and their supporters may interpret the content of the publications as a call to carry out attacks "in the name of Islam."
- Even before the previous World Cup, held in Russia in 2018, similar and even more serious threats were made by ISIS and its supporters to carry out attacks, which ultimately did not materialize.



Poster released on the eve of the World Cup in Russia, showing the heads of soccer players Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo being chopped off by ISIS operatives on the grass of a crowded soccer stadium (Site, May 17, 2018)



ISIS

- ISIS's Al-Naba weekly dedicated its editorial on November 24, 2022, to the World Cup games in Qatar. The article, entitled "Action on the Recommendation of your Prophet," includes harsh inflammatory statements against Christians and Jews. The author refers to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates as countries that promote infidels, obscenity, and homosexuality in the Arabian Peninsula. According to the article, during the event, Jews and Christians defame Qatar with their infidel presence and spread infidel actions and obscenity in the Arabian Peninsula with the support of the rulers of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the "renegade" Emirates. The author points out that Qatar is a tyranny that was the enemy of Islam even when it became a British protectorate. It served the West and presented itself as a supporter of Islam by supporting deviant movements (referring mainly to the Muslim Brotherhood movement). The infidel world gave Qatar the role of hosting the World Cup as a reward for alienating Islam and its laws and serving the "Crusader West," especially the USA and the Jews. The article ends with a call on Muslims to act on the advice of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad and remove the polytheists, Jews, and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula until only Muslims remain there (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, November 24, 2022). It should be noted that the article does not explicitly call for terrorist attacks.

The article entitled "Action on the Recommendation of your Prophet" (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, November 24, 2022)

- On November 7, 2022, about two weeks before the opening of the games, several posts calling on ISIS's supporters to carry out attacks during the World Cup were posted on a Telegram channel affiliated with ISIS. Among other things, it was written that the organization's supporters should "take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity" in which people from around the world gather, to carry out attacks, including biological attacks, against the citizens of the countries of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as revenge for their activities (MEMRI, September 7, 2022)^[1].
- In another post, after the opening of the games, a call was directed to ISIS's supporters traveling to the World Cup to perform "Hijra" (i.e., migration) for the sake of Allah and, by implication, to join ISIS and carry out an attack on its behalf (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022).



Post calling on ISIS's supporters traveling to the World Cup to carry out "hijra" for the sake of Allah (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022)

Al-Qaeda

- Al-Malahim, the media arm of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), published on November 19, 2022, a call to boycott the World Cup. According to Al-Qaeda, the World Cup promotes immoral activity that is contrary to the spirit of Islam, including division (since fans support different groups, which are often not Muslim), obscenity, drinking alcohol, and homosexuality. All of these take place in the Arabian Peninsula, an especially sacred territory for Muslims, where Islam grew and where the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, worked. According to the notice, the "Crusader West" wants to divide the Islamic nation through the World Cup. Referring to the Qatari government, it notes that Qatar could have used the funds that were wasted hosting infidels in the Arabian Peninsula to help Muslims in the world. The notice ends with a warning to Muslims not to watch or attend the games, and not to be proud of the existence of the World Cup or the achievements of the teams. It should be noted that Al-

Qaeda's general command issued a statement in a similar vein (MEMRI, November 19, 2022; The Long War Journal, November 24, 2022)[2]



Right: Notice by Al-Qaeda's general command. Left: Notice by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022)

Hezbollah Could Use Chemical Weapons Against Israel as 'Last Resort'

By Yaakov Lappin

Source: <https://www.israeltoday.co.il/read/report-hezbollah-could-use-chemical-weapons-against-israel-as-last-resort/>

Nov 29 – On Nov. 20, the Saudi *Al-Hadath* news website published a report claiming to detail an Iranian plan to supply rockets—with chemical warheads—to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

According to the report, the rockets are stashed at the Masyaf area in northwestern Syria, and are due to be transferred to Al-Qusayr in the western part of the country, and then to the Bint Jbeil area in south Lebanon, via the Bekaa Valley.

The name Masyaf might ring a bell for those following Israel's campaign against Iranian activity in Syria. On Aug. 25, international media reported that a facility at Maysaf belonging to the Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC), better known by its French name, CERS, was hit by an airstrike.

However, according to IDF Maj. (res.) Tal Beeri, head of the Alma Center's Research Department, which specializes in the Syrian and Lebanese arenas, while the report's claims with regard to chemical weapons smuggling should be taken with a grain of salt, the scenario of Hezbollah using crude chemical warheads is not imaginary.

"The geographical area described in the [*Al Hadath*] report ... makes sense. That is the area of the Iranian land corridor used to smuggle weapons to Syria and Lebanon," said Beeri. Nevertheless, he continued, "*Al-Hadath* is a Saudi media platform whose sources of information are questionable. It is also well known that the Saudi authorities employ *Al-Hadath* to disseminate material in order to gain influence."

But regardless, he said, Hezbollah could well assemble rockets that employ the readily available chemical chlorine, he said. Hezbollah would not need to smuggle chlorine to Lebanon from Syria, he noted.

"We're not talking about mustard gas or sarin. Chlorine is commonly utilized in civilian industry," said Beeri. "One does not have to be a rocket scientist to place it in shells or rockets."

Throughout the Syrian civil war, Islamic State deployed chlorine gas in Syria. When it comes into contact with the human body, it causes chemical burns, and in some cases, can also cause asphyxiation.

"One can see what chlorine does by examining the industrial accident that occurred at Jordan's Akaba port in June this year. A chlorine tank exploded, and within seconds, the chemical spread, killing 12 people and injuring 250," said Beeri.

"This is a simple and rudimentary tactic, but it has the potential to cause harm," he added.

The Syrian military also placed chlorine in shells and rockets, as well as in barrel bombs dropped from helicopters during its war against rebel forces, in Duma in April 2018, and in Idlib in September 2018, said Beeri.

"Hezbollah does not require assistance from Syria to do this," he added.

"We cannot rule out the prospect that Hezbollah may employ chemical weapons tactically in the next conflict with Israel. The most likely candidate is chlorine. If this happens, it will likely be limited use, whether by shells or rockets, when Hezbollah's back is against the wall," he stated.

The most likely targets would be Israel Defense Forces units maneuvering in Lebanon, according to Beeri, as well as forces stationed on the border. "The excuse would be that it's being used to defend Lebanon," he said.

Editor says
BIG MISTAKE.
HUGE!





The goal of such a last resort would be to instill fear and create a victory picture for Hezbollah, which is likely aware that such an attack would trigger severe and potentially unprecedented Israeli retaliation.

The Israeli home front would not likely be targeted, Beeri argued.

"Hezbollah is ideologically radical and dedicated to Israel's destruction, but it is not foolish. As a result, any use of such weapons would be limited, against IDF movements," he said.

The IDF, for its part, may need to take into account a scenario in which Hezbollah, in distress, could deploy chemical substances against its forces in a certain manner, and this scenario warrants preparations, he said.

ISIS group announces death of leader

Source: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/11/30/ISIS-group-announces-death-of-leader->

Nov 30 – The ISIS extremist group said Wednesday that its leader Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi has been killed in battle and announced a replacement. A spokesman for the group said Hashimi, an Iraqi, was killed "in combat with enemies of God", without elaborating on the date of his death or the circumstances.

Speaking in an audio message, the spokesman identified the group's new leader as Abu al-Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurashi.

Qurashi refers to a tribe of the Prophet Mohammed, from whom ISIS leaders must claim descent.

After a meteoric rise in Iraq and Syria in 2014 that saw it conquer vast swathes of territory, ISIS saw its self-proclaimed "caliphate" collapse under a wave of offensives. It was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria two years later, but sleeper cells of the Sunni Muslim extremist group still carry out attacks in both countries and claim attacks elsewhere in the world.

ISIS's previous leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi, was killed earlier this year in a US raid in Idlib province in northern Syria.

His predecessor Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed, also in Idlib, in October 2019.

Jihadists Condemn Qatar and the World Cup with Hostile Rhetoric

By Lucas Webber

Terrorism Monitor Volume: 20 Issue: 23

Source: <https://jamestown.org/program/jihadists-condemn-qatar-and-the-world-cup-with-hostile-rhetoric/>

Dec 02 – Major international sporting events have long been a target for jihadist groups looking to capitalize on these moments to bring attention to themselves, promote their messages, and malign their enemies. At present, there is no other professional athletics competition on the scale of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which takes place from November 21 to December 18. This spectacle has been a focus of hardline Islamists as well as jihadist groups and their affiliates, including, al-Qaeda Central (AQC), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and the Islamic State (IS) ([Akhbar Alaan](#), November 26). These groups have taken aim at the World Cup, its Qatari hosts, nation-state participants, and even the sport of soccer itself.

Hardline Islamists and Al-Qaeda Jihadists Condemn the World Cup in Qatar

One of the earliest and most detailed critiques of the World Cup and Qatar came from a hardline British Islamist who published an entire magazine on the subject ([MEMRI](#), November 16). The magazine was uploaded to the Internet Archive on November 15 by an account named "Birds of Jannah328" ([Internet Archive](#), November 15). It begins by declaring that "one of the biggest diseases which have been injected into the hearts of the Muslims is that of nationalism (asabiyah)" and that "instead of being united under a Khilafah (an Islamic State implementing the Sharia) Muslims are today divided into 56 nations each with its own flag, national anthem, football team, [and] illegitimate leader." Additionally, Qatar is scorned for being the first nation amongst the Arab states to establish relations with Israel and the World Cup is derided for the "free mixing between men and women," the association of the tournament with the promotion of alcohol and gambling, "FIFA rulings contradicting the Shari'ah", and the influence of soccer stars as negative role models because many have been "involved in sex scandals, adultery, drunkenness, criminal behavior etc." ([Internet Archive](#), November 15).

AQAP, meanwhile, was among the first jihadist groups to formally comment on the event ([Jihadology](#), November 19). Its November 19 statement criticizes Qatar for pursuing friendly relations with the West, permitting Christian churches to be built on the Arabian Peninsula and for hosting the World Cup itself, which the group argues leads to religious and moral corruption, including homosexuality and drawing masses of infidels to Islamic lands. AQAP suggests Qatar should instead use its resources to help oppressed Muslims in the Levant, Yemen, Myanmar, and across the African continent. This was followed by an AQC release titled "Regarding the Pornographic Invasion





of the Peninsula of Muhammad through the Qatar World Cup 2022” ([Jihadology](#), November 20). The article condemns the Qatari government for poisoning, subverting, and domesticating Islam in the country and alleges that the World Cup promotes a culture of homosexuality, debauchery, prostitution, corruption, and atheism. AQC asserts that professional sports in general – and the World Cup in particular, given its powerful influence – are nefariously weaponized against Islam and its values.

The Islamic State’s Sentiments on the World Cup and Qatar

Days after the AQC release, IS published its own editorial on Qatar and the World Cup in its *al-Naba* weekly newsletter ([Jihadology](#), November 24). IS declared Qatar a tyrant that is among the most powerful Arab states, claiming that the country is waging war on Islam. The publication also lambasts Qatar for hosting al-Udeid Airbase, where U.S. troops are present. Anger at Qatar for hosting this base is a theme in the aforementioned Islamist magazine, the AQAP statement, as well as in posts by the pro-IS Uzbek- and Turkish-language Islom Tavhid Xabarlari propaganda network. The pro-IS outlet At-Taqwa amplified the *al-Naba* article by creating an image with a quote from it about Qatar being subservient to “the Crusaders.” [1] Islom Tavhid Xabarlari has been laser-focused on the World Cup and the sport of soccer. It posted two videos on Telegram featuring text commentary about how the sport is used by world powers to hypnotize people and misdirect their passions, which prevents people from seeing who their real enemies are ([Telegram/Islom Tavhid Xabarlari](#), November 2). Further, the propaganda network posted a lengthy statement about how soccer has become a “religion” and causes Muslims to leave Islam and convert to the sport, with stadiums becoming “churches” and fans gathering to see their “prophets,” who are the athletes ([Telegram/Islom Tavhid Xabarlari](#), November 26). Moreover, the pro-IS Talaa al-Ansar Foundation posted an image showing Qatar’s main stadium and warned against allowing such things to distract Muslims from their duty of jihad. [2] Talaa al-Ansar doubled down with a short video released on November 29 drawing a contrast between Qatari soccer fans and reverent IS militants. [3] Another widely circulated image in the online IS space showed scrawny children with Qatar’s arena in the backdrop and featured a caption about how \$4.3 billion has been spent on the facility while thousands of Muslim children are dying of hunger ([YouTube/Rasanae Tawhid](#), November 20). This again demonstrates IS’s disdain for Qatar.

Conclusion

Al-Qaeda and IS stopped short of explicitly calling for attacks in Qatar and had only limited general comments about the duty of jihad against the country. Yet there have been some calls for attacks online. For instance, pro-IS social media has widely circulated an image showing the flags of the international coalition “versus” the IS flag, with football stadium lights as the background and the word “SOON” alongside pictures of a grenade and dynamite. This release’s timing coincided with the start of the World Cup ([Telegram/Sawt Al-Zargawi](#), November 21). A second image posted on TamTam urges IS supporters to sabotage and firebomb World Cup targets, release scorpions and poisonous snakes into the stadium, and kill soldiers and then use weapons to murder others in the vicinity. [4]

Nevertheless, despite the sporadic threats by jihadist groups and their online sympathizers, the Qatar World Cup has thus far mostly been a vector for IS and AQ to rhetorically attack their enemies rather than to incite acts of violence against the event. It remains to be seen if such hostile sentiments will be successful in inspiring attacks among the masses of their online followers, however.

Notes:

- [1] At-Taqwa published the image on a Telegram channel on November 29.
- [2] Talaa al-Ansar Foundation posted the image in a now-deleted TamTam channel sometime in late November.
- [3] Talaa al-Ansar Foundation published the video on Telegram on November 29.
- [4] This image was found in a TamTam online messaging application channel and was posted on November 21.

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Survivors of Radical Islamic Terror Bombing in EU Capital Attend Trial

Source: <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2022/12/04/survivors-radical-islamic-terror-bombing-eu-capital-attend-trial/>

Dec 04 – Jaana Mettala was six months pregnant and on her way to work when the bomb exploded in the heart of Brussels’ European Union quarter. She suffered severe burns, but Mettala and her baby survived – 32 other people did not.

It’s now more than six years since the deadliest peacetime attacks on Belgian soil. And Mettala yearns for closure as the trial of 10 men accused over the suicide bombings at Brussels airport and an underground metro station starts in earnest Monday.





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"I hope that the trial ends with a fair result and we can put this behind us," Mettala said. "Even if there are after-effects that we will keep forever."

She is going to testify at the trial – which will be the biggest in Belgium's judicial history with hundreds of plaintiffs. It is expected to last between six and nine months.



The 10 defendants face charges including murder, attempted murder and membership, or participation in the acts of a terrorist group, over the morning rush hour attacks at Belgium's main airport and on the central commuter line on March 22, 2016.

If convicted, some of them could face up to 30 years in prison.

Among the accused is Salah Abdeslam — the only survivor among the Islamic State extremists who in 2015 struck the Bataclan theatre in Paris, city cafes and France's national stadium. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole over the atrocities in the French capital.

He will be joined in the dock by his childhood friend, Mohamed Abrini, who walked away from Brussels' Zaventem airport after his explosives failed to detonate.

Abrini has been sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for 22 years for charges including complicity to terrorist murder in the Paris attacks trial.

Oussama Atar, who has been identified as a possible organizer of the deadly attacks on both Paris and Brussels, will be tried in absentia. He is believed to have died in the Islamic State's final months of fighting in Iraq and Syria.

Mettala hopes that facing most of the accused will help her leave behind the anguish.

"It's a step on the path toward another kind of serenity," she said. "It will be very, very hard. But I'm not someone trying to avoid difficulty. Because you need confrontation to get stronger."

In addition to the 32 people who died in Brussels, some 900 were hurt or suffered mental trauma.

Frederic — who asked to be identified only by his first name — was in the metro when the bomb went off. He said he was only slightly injured in the leg. But what he saw that day in the carriage where the device exploded keeps haunting him.





"I'll skip the macabre details," he said. "These are the details that remain and that are hard to get rid of. This trial will be for me the possibility to heal, to go through the grief process."



When the bomb went off at the Maelbeek station at 9:11 a.m., Mettala was on the platform. She was badly hurt but did not lose consciousness. She sustained serious burn injuries to her face, legs and hands and was taken to the emergency room of a Brussels hospital where she was prepared for urgent surgery.

She only woke up a couple of days later. Mettala was then transferred to an intensive care unit in another hospital in the nearby town of Louvain.

"That's when I realized that I could have died," she recalled. "I did not think about it when (the attack) happened. I only thought about the baby in my belly. I did not think about my injuries, I was only focused on reaching the hospital to find out whether the baby was doing fine."

She and her newborn daughter were released from the hospital four months later.

"She is 6 1/2 years old now. She is healthy." Mettala said. "She knows I was injured when she was in my belly. And I always told her it's she who gave me the strength."

The trial at NATO's former headquarters was initially expected to start in October but was pushed back to allow sufficient time to replace individual glass boxes where the defendants were expected to sit. After defence lawyers argued that they could not consult with their clients and that the boxes make them look like animals in a cage, they have been replaced by one large cubicle shared by the defendants. The new set-up has been welcomed by lawyers with Life4Brussels, a group supporting victims.

"The defendants were talking to each other (during the jury selection), it's not a bad thing since it is extremely important for the victims that they are in good condition to explain, to address the court, and answer questions," said Maryse Alié, a lawyer working with the group.

Because of the delay, the trial now coincides with the beginning of the festive season.

"When you have young children, there is a paradox between the ordeal of this trial and the end-of-year celebrations," Mettala said. "It's a bit unfortunate that this is happening right now, in the pre-holiday season."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Trial? WHY?



Did al-Qaeda Die with Ayman al-Zawahiri?

By Raffaello Pantucci and Kabir Taneja

Source: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/did-al-qaeda-die-ayman-al-zawahiri>



Ayman al-Zawahiri appears in an al-Qaeda video released in April 2022. Photo credit: Al-Qaeda media.

Dec 04 – In May 2011, it took al-Qaeda just a few days to formally comment on Osama bin Laden's death, and only until June for them to confirm Ayman al-Zawahiri's ascension to the organization's top job. When Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in 2019, the Islamic State was even more efficient, taking just days to both confirm his death and announce his successor. But despite the United States announcing that Zawahiri was killed at the end of July, al-Qaeda has thus far neither confirmed his death nor announced who will fill his shoes. Adding to the layers of confusion, they released a new recording by Zawahiri, though it did not contain indications of when it was made, and his image continues to be used across their publications. It is not clear what this silence means for the organization and the wider terrorist threat from al-Qaeda, but it does not seem positive for the group.

Analysts have been monitoring al-Qaeda media for indications of what the group's future hierarchy will look like. Experts and governments do not expect the group to completely collapse or stop targeting the United States and its interests at home or abroad. In recent testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Christine Abizaid, director of the National Counterterrorism Center, outlined her office's assessment that while al-Qaeda's capacity has diminished, the group's North African and Somali affiliates still pose significant threats. Al-Qaeda's behavior over the past three months reinforces this assessment: It is increasingly difficult to believe that the group can exert the same threat given its leadership depletion.

There are a number of possible reasons for al-Qaeda to remain silent about Zawahiri's death. It could of course be the case that the United States is wrong about his death. This would seem unlikely given the confidence with which President Biden publicly spoke about the strike, the seemingly specific evidence he claimed to have seen, and the details briefed to the press by anonymous officials. The announcement, though with less fanfare, was similar to the announcement of the Abbottabad raid in Pakistan that targeted Osama bin Laden, for which the government also did not present pictorial evidence. But it would not be the first time that the U.S. government was very confident about the success of a drone strike, only to walk back much later on who was killed or what actually transpired.

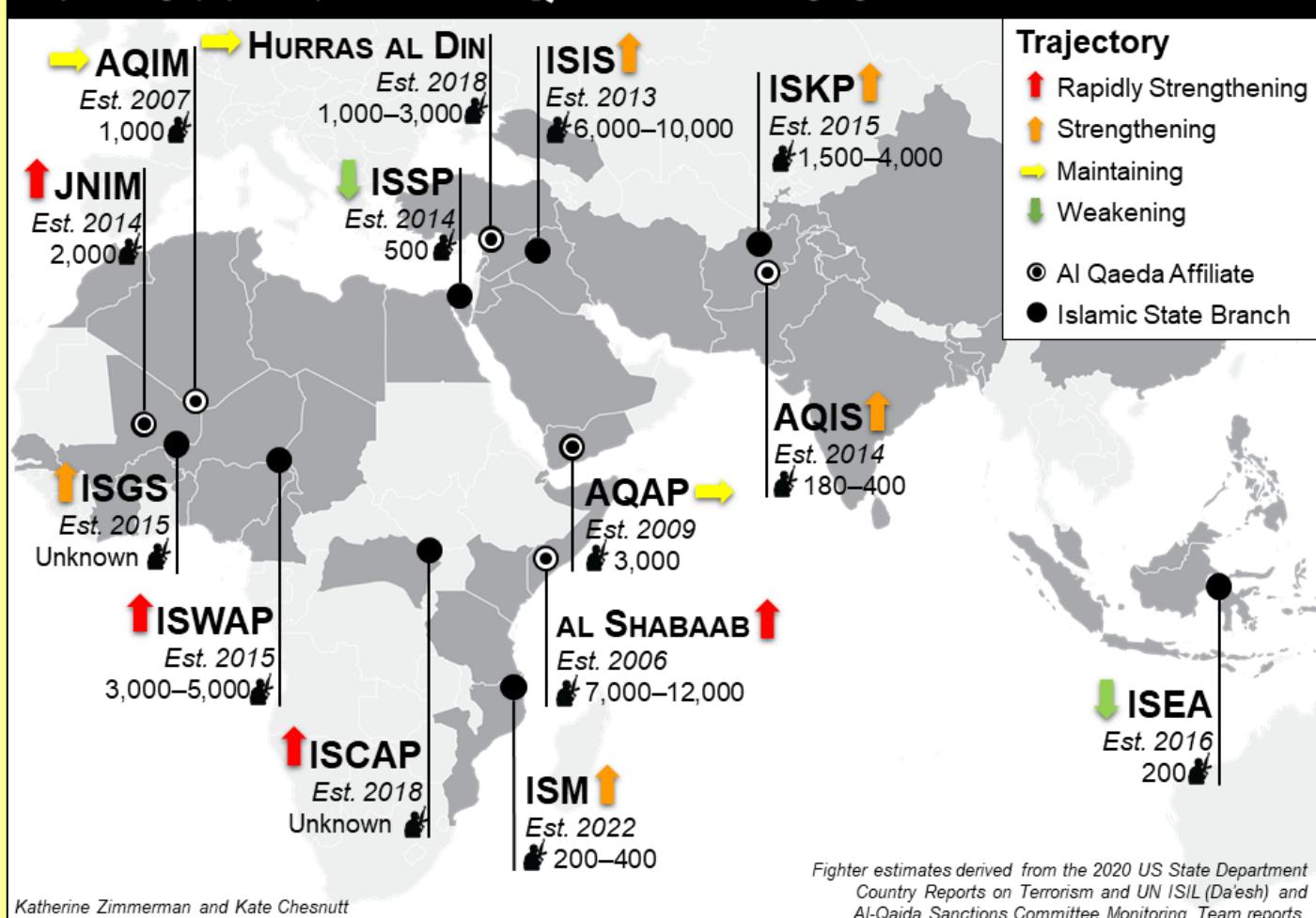
It could also be that al-Qaeda is uncertain as to what has happened and whether Zawahiri is dead or not. This would seem strange given where he was located and the reported ease with which al-Qaeda figures are able to move around Afghanistan, with some even traveling to Kabul to meet with the Taliban leadership. Given such public reporting of their movements and the group's free hand in Afghanistan, it would be odd if al-Qaeda was unable to ascertain whether its leader was deceased or not, and even more surprising that Zawahiri did not have a clear succession plan in place.

Instead, the reason for al-Qaeda's delayed response could be that the group has failed to make contact with Zawahiri's presumptive successor, Saif al-Adl. Widely believed to be in Iran, Adl is clearly living in a



dangerous and restricted environment. Not only has Iran always had a manipulative and untrusting relationship with al-Qaeda, but the country's porous security makes it a dangerous place for people to hide. Senior Iranian officials are [killed frequently](#) in Israeli operations. One of these Israeli operations, likely undertaken at the request of the United States, targeted Abu Muhammad al-Masri, a former senior figure in al-Qaeda also sheltering in Iran; he was [gunned down](#) in the street alongside Hamza bin Laden's widow in the middle of Tehran.

2022 SCORECARD: AL QAEDA AND ISIS



It could well be that Adl is in contact with al-Qaeda leadership and simply hiding away, fearful of raising his head above the parapet. While lying low, he could be looking to cement internal hierarchies in al-Qaeda, or making sure his life is not offered as a bargaining chip by Tehran in its ongoing efforts to normalize ties with the United States around the [negotiations](#) to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Or al-Qaeda and Adl might simply be unable to communicate with each other and coordinate their next steps while the current risks of exposure are so high.

Or Adl might be dead. If that is the case, the organization could be playing some sort of strategic game with the United States or its own people, trying to mask the leader's death as some internal power struggle plays out. The Taliban [sat on Mullah Omar's death](#) for years, revealing it only when their hand was forced by the need for senior approval of international negotiations.

Though the Taliban know something about keeping mum, their silence in this case is also puzzling. The Taliban presumably picked up the pieces of Zawahiri's corpse and likely knew he was there in the first place, considering the house targeted in the drone strike was a stone's throw away from some embassies in central Kabul. Their decision not to comment could be part of their efforts to manage their fragile but deep relationship with al-Qaeda, while also avoiding drawing attention to the foreign terror group presence in direct [contravention](#) of their agreement with the United States. Regardless of the reason for al-Qaeda's silence, it seems to be indicative of an organization that is not in control of its situation. Not responding to reports of a leader's death and instead releasing an unconvincing proof of life



audiotape indicates weakness rather than studied strength. The decision by al-Qaeda's South Asia branch, al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), to [support the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan](#) (TTP) in its ideological and operational aims, including its opposition to the Pakistani state, might be a reflection of fragmentation resulting from this uncertainty at the top. The Taliban have been trying to act as a broker between Islamabad and the TTP, while still preserving their relationship with al-Qaeda—but AQIS's partnership with the TTP seems to run against the strategy pursued by the Taliban and al-Qaeda's core leadership. AQIS's approach could be deliberate and coordinated, but more likely it indicates a lack of leadership from al-Qaeda core and possible fragmentation among its affiliates. In a recent [propaganda release](#), AQIS reaffirmed its own legitimacy as the only "official" al-Qaeda entity in the region, potentially reflecting a level of confusion between cadre and organization since the news of Zawahiri's death. Assessments of al-Qaeda's operations now often focus on [groups in Africa](#) taking on the leadership mantle of the organization. Terrorist [violence](#) has surged across much of the continent, while globally al-Qaeda is linked to an ever-shrinking number of attacks. This is an al-Qaeda that has transformed from the globe-straddling hubristic network that launched the Sept. 11 attacks to one that now plays second fiddle to the Islamic State and is unable to operationalize its own succession plans. While al-Qaeda's African affiliates display undeniable strength and disturbing capability, they seem focused mostly on the parts of Africa in which they operate. This capacity could be turned toward external targets, but so far it has not. Though it would be foolish to entirely discount al-Qaeda, the group is no longer the menace that it once was and would struggle to return to its prior position.

The two-decade experience of trying to fight along a global frontline appears to have worn al-Qaeda down to a shadow of its former self, and the unacknowledged death of its leader in the middle of Kabul only serves to highlight this. Terrorism has not gone away, but it increasingly looks like the core of al-Qaeda has.

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Kabir Taneja is a fellow in the Strategic Studies Programme at the Observer Research Foundation, India. He is the author of "The ISIS Peril: The World's Most Feared Terror Group and Its Shadow on South Asia" (Penguin Viking, 2019).

'We Need to Wake Up': How ISIS Made Africa Its Second Home

By Shola Lawal

Source: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ade3n/south-africa-isis-terror>

Dec 02 – The terror alert was as specific as it was alarming. In the upcoming weekend in one of Johannesburg's wealthiest areas, terrorists were planning an attack on large gatherings, the alert from the US, the UK and others said. The unexpected warning shocked people in South Africa. The South African government too, scrambling, issued advisories of its own and [flooded the streets with police officers](#).

That alert was for the 29th of October. In the end, thick as the tension was, no attack happened and [details of the threat's nature are virtually non-existent](#), with US and South African authorities giving little away. But experts have told VICE World News that information in the alert indicated something serious and that all fingers point to an unlikely-sounding perpetrator in South Africa: ISIS.

The US must have had "solid evidence" of an attack, [said Martin Ewi](#), a lead analyst with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). Vague as it was, the warning included disturbing details. "This was one of the most precise alerts; they told you when and where the attack was going to happen," Ewi said. "Very few alerts have those kinds of details."

In a dramatic turn of events, South African authorities first downplayed the threat, then they [accused](#) the US of hoarding intelligence and being too forward, before turning around again to say the US blew up weeks of undercover work, although this is [uncorroborated](#). But even as the country went into panic mode, analysts said it was already infiltrated. It's only one of several nations folding into the rapidly expanding network of ISIS as the terror group makes Africa a second home.

ISIS's presence in southern Africa is most obvious in Mozambique where [brutal campaigns](#) by its affiliate Ahlu Sunnah wa Jama'a (ASWJ) have killed more than 3,000, displaced nearly a million and threatened billion-dollar gas investments. But a budding network of ISIS supporters in neighbouring South Africa, where about [2 per cent](#) of the population is Muslim, has gone largely unnoticed.

"The ISIS threat has been growing here, but South Africans are naive and like to think that this can never happen to them," said terrorism expert Jasmine Opperman. Authorities have treated the issue with soft gloves, she said. Years ago, in the age of its caliphate in Syria and Iraq, some [60 to 100 South Africans](#) left to join ISIS. Some of them have returned. "We need to wake up and see the threat is here," said Opperman.





Since its [crushing territorial defeat](#) in 2019, ISIS has regrouped in Africa – lured by an intoxicating mix of minerals, porous borders and weak governance. Its network covers at least 20 African countries, Ewi said, making Africa the second most active ISIS hub after the Middle East.

The Salafi-Jihadi Movement in Africa: May 2021

CT AEI



pummelled. Now, its African offshoots [could even be stronger than ISIS central](#).

Along with ISIS, a host of terror groups are operating in Africa, swarming like ants on sugar. Attacks have soared by [over 300 per cent](#) in the last decade alone, according to the Pentagon-funded Africa Center for Strategic Studies. More than [14 000 people have been killed in the past year](#).

The Sahel – vast arid lands separating the Sahara to the north from the southern savannah regions – and Somalia, are hotspots. In the tri-border area where Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger meet, militants prey on villagers, milking them for ransom and protection levees. Among them is the Islamic State Greater Sahara (ISGS). It's linked to [nearly 1200 civilian deaths in the Sahel in 2022](#). Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) holds sway in the Lake Chad region. In June, that faction helped the mothership [claim more attacks in Nigeria](#) than Iraq.

Somalia, Libya, Egypt, and DRC house active networks. And cells in Tanzania, Niger and Kenya need to be watched closely, Ewi said. "Every country is in trouble," he concluded.

An attack in the last weekend of October in Sandton would have been catastrophic. Thousands were set to march that day in the city's annual Pride parade. And 30 minutes away, the [Soweto Derby](#) was about to kick off.

Where it previously chased a caliphate that it could directly rule, what remains of ISIS has changed tact. It is instead collaborating with established militant groups to claim territory, bolstering their ranks with African fighters [who joined the 'caliphate' but moved back](#) after it fell. Those parleys, even with its archenemy al-Qaeda, have seen the group build a vast network of terror, stretching throughout the African continent.

ISIS's new-found fluidity has also put the [coalition of countries](#) determined to stop it on the back foot: security agencies once rejoiced over in-fighting between ISIS and opposing groups like al-Qaeda to make gains. Those days may be over.

"It's easy to fight a group that is confined," Ewi said, because when the militants were in Iraq and Syria, "it was easier to flush them out."

"But now when they are spread across countries how do you flush them out?" he added.

ISIS attacks on the continent date back to around 2014. But its focus here coincides with when its Middle East bases were





"It's scary because you're responsible for an event that affects human life. But we decided to go for it," said Kaye Ally, founder of Johannesburg Pride. The annual march was back online after a two-year break because of Covid, and cancelling, Ally said, would have been giving in to terrorists. She bet on her country's forces. Armed officers swamped the area, attack dogs in tow. "The security was tenfold. People didn't feel they were in danger," she said.

Analysts think the Pride march could have been the target of the would-be attackers – some 150,000 people normally turn up. And both the US and South African authorities had reached out to Ally to inform her of the threat after the security alert went viral. But Ally claims her event was not directly threatened. The US embassy was in touch, Ally said, because its staff had planned to be at the event. They didn't show. And only 35,000 defiant marchers braved the alert.

Identified in at least two cities – Durban and Cape Town – ISIS networks in South Africa appear to be raising money to fund branches in Mozambique and DR Congo, according to the US Treasury. Its members mostly operate legitimate businesses, Ewi said, making it harder for authorities to clamp down. Still, South Africa has been slow to nail and jail suspects, or respond to attack alerts, he added. Although President Cyril Ramaphosa fumed that the US did not relay information before sending out the alert for the 29th of October, the analyst said some correspondence, even shortly before the warning went out, was likely.

The US government did not respond directly to a request for comment from VICE World News. State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters after the incident that his government was "in touch" with South African authorities and that "when we are in possession of information regarding a potential threat, we do provide it to American personnel." South Africa has nailed a few ISIS suspects – one couple and a third person are on trial for the gruesome killing of two British botanists in KwaZulu-Natal: they dumped their bodies in crocodile-infested waters. And two brothers – The Thulsie Twins – are imprisoned for planning bomb attacks and joining ISIS. Despite the October drama, South Africa remains relatively safe from ISIS for now, Opperman said. But she said she fears another attack, one that authorities might not catch – until an alert is sounded.

Weapons from Ukraine's war now coming to Africa

NO surprise!



Source: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/12/06/weapons-from-ukraines-war-now-coming-to-africa/>

Dec 06 – Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said that weapons from the raging war between Russia and Ukraine are now slipping into the Lake Chad Basin region.

Lake Chad region, an economically and socially integrated area in West and Central Africa straddling Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In his opening address at the 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Buhari, who is also the Chairman of the Summit, said the situation which had heightened the proliferation of small arms and light weapons called for reawakening of the border security of the countries of the region.

President Buhari said the Russia/Ukraine conflict and other violent situations in the Sahel region of West Africa had compounded the Boko Haram terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin region. He said though a lot had been done to decimate the strength of the Boko Haram terror group and other violent extremist groups in the region, terrorists threats still persist.

"Regrettably, the situation in the Sahel and the raging war in Ukraine serve as major sources of weapons and fighters that bolster the ranks of the terrorists in Lake Chad Region. A substantial proportion of the arms and ammunitions procured to execute the war in Libya, continues to find its way to the Lake Chad Region and other parts of the Sahel. Weapons being used for the war in Ukraine and Russia are equally beginning to filter to the region.

...The question why there are weapons from Ukraine in Africa is critical. Even western countries supplying weapons to Ukraine are seriously concerned about such cases. Reselling weapons abroad – to Europe (Sweden) and Africa is becoming a common practice in Ukraine.

Turkish Journalist Serving 297 Years in Prison for Criticizing Erdogan and Jihadists

By Abdullah Bozkurt

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/63872/turkish-journalist-serving-297-years-in-prison>

Nov 30 – A prominent Turkish journalist who was accused of defaming an al-Qaeda-linked radical group that endorsed Osama bin Laden and called for armed jihad and the beheading of Americans has been sentenced to nearly 300 years in prison. Hidayet Karaca used to run major TV network Samanyolu, which aired coverage critical of the government of Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan before Karaca's





unlawful imprisonment in December 2014, a move that was described by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) as politically motivated. On June 4, 2022, the journalist was sentenced to 297 years, nine months at the end of a trial brought by the government.

Turkish journalist Hidayet Karaca has been jailed since 2014.

According to the ruling, dated November 22, 2022 and issued by the İstanbul 3rd Judgeship of Criminal Enforcement (İstanbul 3.İnfaz Hakimliği), the journalist must serve a total of 318 years, five months in prison when added to his conviction from another bogus case in 2015.

The sentencing sends a chilling message for a press freedom in Turkey, already in shambles, and reinforces the widely held view that negative coverage of jihadist groups aligned with the Erdoğan government is a red line for journalists. Karaca was kept in jail for one-and-a-half years before the public prosecutor brought charges against him in an indictment filed on July 22, 2016. His trial under case file No.2016/62 was concluded this year with a conviction. The case was launched after the Erdoğan government claimed that Turkish jihadist group Tahsiyeciler, led by Mollah Muhammed (aka Mullah Muhammed el-Kesri; real name Mehmet Doğan), was smeared in a TV series broadcast by Samanyolu TV and that Karaca was responsible for it. In seized taped recordings that were found during the execution of search warrants, Mollah Muhammed was heard calling for violent jihad: "I'm telling you to take up your guns and kill them," he said. He also asked his followers to build bombs and mortar shells in their homes and urged the decapitation of Americans, claiming that Islam allows such practices. "If the sword is not used, then this is not Islam," he stated.

According to Mollah Muhammed, all Muslims were obligated to respond to then-al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's armed fight. He reiterated his fondness for bin Laden in a live TV interview after his release. Although Mollah Muhammed and his associates were indicted and tried, Erdoğan started defending the group in 2014, vouching for the radical imam. The campaign to save the indicted Mollah Muhammed was first launched by the Sabah daily, owned by Erdoğan's family, on March 13, 2014. An article tried to portray him as a victim. The government claimed that Mollah Muhammed was framed by the Gülen movement, a group that is highly critical of Erdoğan on a range of issues from corruption to Turkey's arming of jihadist groups in Syria and Libya.

In the end, Erdoğan helped secure the acquittal of Mollah Muhammed and his associates through his loyalist judges and prosecutors, launched a crackdown on journalists who criticized the radical group and even hired a lawyer to file a civil suit in the US against Muslim scholar Fethullah Gülen, who has been an outspoken critic of radical and jihadist groups, for defaming this fanatic.

The case was rife with irregularities and procedural flaws arising from immense government pressure that deprived the journalist of the right to a fair trial. The authorities also cracked down on his lawyers. "I am defending myself under very difficult circumstances. Some of my lawyers have left, some of them were arrested. I could not even find a lawyer to write a petition for me," Karaca said during a hearing in August 2016. The case is just one of many that aim to intimidate journalists and discourage them from writing about al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups and their links to the Erdoğan government.

Karaca is an experienced Turkish broadcaster who served as chairman of the Television Broadcasters Association as well as Television Audience Measurement (TİAK). He had worked in the print media for years, serving as bureau representative for the Zaman daily in İzmir and Ankara before accepting a job with the Samanyolu Broadcasting Group in 1999. When he was taken into custody by police officers who raided the television studio where he was working on Dec. 14, 2014, he was the general manager of the network.

Public prosecutor Hasan Yılmaz, an Erdoğan loyalist who launched a criminal investigation of Karaca in 2014 for defamation of Mollah Muhammed and his jihadist comrades, was rewarded by the government and promoted to deputy chief public prosecutor in Istanbul. In 2020 Erdoğan appointed him to the position of deputy justice minister, where he still serves as of the present day.

Abdullah Bozkurt, a Middle East Forum Writing Fellow, is a Swedish-based investigative journalist and analyst who runs the [Nordic Research and Monitoring Network](#) and is chairman of the Stockholm Center for Freedom.



Bali bomber released on parole after serving half of 20-year sentence

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/07/asia/bali-bomber-indonesia-release-parole-intl-hnk/index.html>



Dec 07 – [Indonesia](#) has released on parole Umar Patek, a bomb maker in the deadly 2002 Bali attacks, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights said on Wednesday.

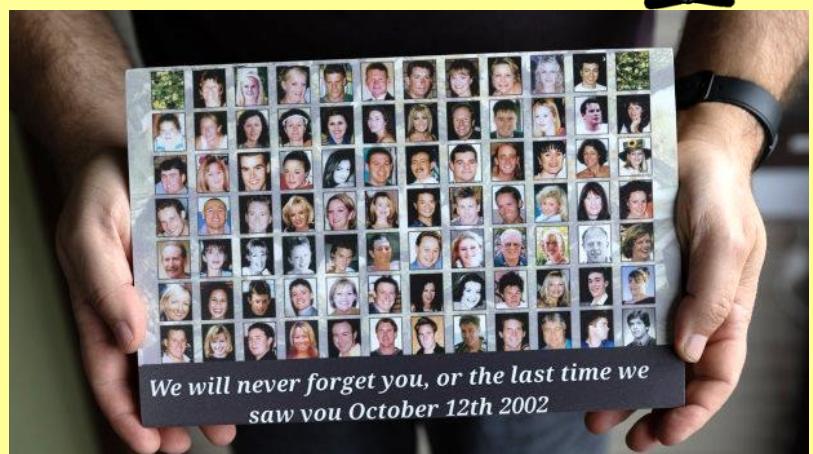
Patek, a member of the al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah, was jailed for 20 years in 2012 after he was found guilty of mixing bombs that ripped through two [Bali](#) nightclubs, killing **202 people**, including 88 Australians.

After his release on Wednesday, Patek is required to join a “mentoring program” until April 2030, according to the ministry statement. If any violation is discovered during that time, his parole will be revoked, the ministry added.

In August, Indonesia's government said that Patek was eligible for parole after his sentence was reduced, a decision that sparked criticism from the victims' families. His scheduled release was delayed after uproar from Australia.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese also criticized the announcement at the time, saying he planned to raise the issue with Indonesia.

Patek, **who was also convicted for his role in deadly church bombings in 2000**, was granted a series of small reductions to his sentence as part of remissions regularly given to inmates to mark Indonesia's August 17 independence day.





ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

On Thursday, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said it would be a "difficult day" for Australians who lost loved ones and relatives in the attacks.

"I think this going to be a very difficult day for many Australians – all Australians – to hear about the release of Umar Patek," Marles told ABC radio. "I'm particularly thinking right now of the families of those who were killed and injured in the Bali bombings."

Marles added that the Australian government would continue to engage Indonesian authorities about ensuring Patek was under constant surveillance.

Many members of the Jemaah Islamiyah group, like Patek, trained and fought in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the early 1990s and were deeply influenced by al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's teachings.

Patek eluded investigators looking into the 2002 attacks for many years until his capture in January 2011 in Abbottabad, Pakistan, the same village where US Navy SEALs shot and killed bin Laden several months later.

Patek was then extradited to Indonesia, where he was sentenced in 2012.

Three of the masterminds of the Bali bombings – Imam Samudra, Amrozi bin Nurhasyim and Ali Ghufron – were executed in 2008.

Patek was the last of the accused to stand trial in Indonesia.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: The same s** allover the world. When we say 20 years, we mean 20 years in prison! Is it so difficult to understand and so easy to insult the memories of innocent people died?

Most convicted terrorists radicalised online, finds MoJ-backed study

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/dec/08/most-convicted-terrorists-radicalised-online-finds-study>

Dec 08 – Most convicted terrorists in Britain were turned to extremism by the internet, with half of those radicalised online having some problems with mental health, personality disorders, depression, or autism, the most authoritative study of its kind has found. The study for the Ministry of Justice, released on Thursday, examined official risk assessments of every convicted terrorist in prison since 2010 in England and Wales. The majority were radicalised at least in part online – a trend caused by technology and the tactics of groups such as [Islamic State](#).

While those incited to carry out or support violence online make up the majority of terrorists, their plots, according to the study, are less likely to succeed.

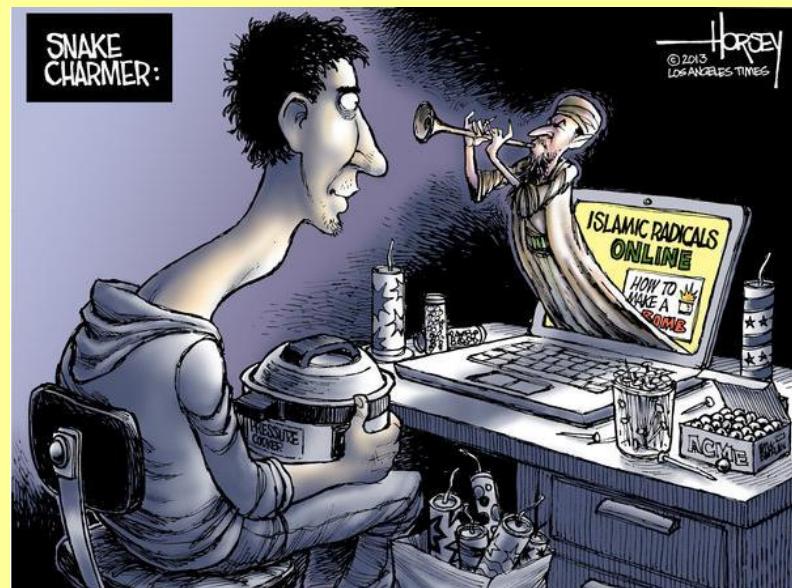
The research challenges conventional wisdom that the growth of internet radicalisation by Islamists and the extreme right allows terrorism to fester out of sight of the security services and police.

The researchers from the prison and probation service, as well as Nottingham Trent and Bournemouth Universities, were given access to [Extremism Risk Guidance 22+](#) forms. These are written for the prison and probation services and assess the commitment to terrorism, as well as the danger posed by convicted terrorists. The forms include material from counter-terrorism policing.

For all convicted terrorists in jail from 2010 to 2021, 490 records were retrieved and 437 studied in detail. Nine out of 10 terrorist prisoners were male, 44% were aged 25 or under when convicted, and seven out of 10 were British-born. The study finds 4% were convicted for animal rights violent extremism, 18% for extreme rightwing terrorist offences, and 72% for Islamist-incited offences.

The study reveals the growing importance of the internet to its current-day dominance in radicalisation. In 2013–15, 43% of those in prison for terrorism were radicalised wholly or in part online. That figure rose to 84% in 2016–18, and between 2019–21 was 92% of those convicted. The latter figure may have been further inflated by Covid lockdowns.

From 2015 onward, IS launched an intense online propaganda war, with the far right mimicking its strategy as they tried to gain recruits.





For those radicalised online between 2010 and 2021, 28% had previous convictions for any crime, and 15% of these were for violent offences. None had a past terrorism conviction, 4% had a past conviction for a terrorism-related offence, 42% has a “strong presence” of mental health issues, neurodivergence and personality disorder, and 9% had these partly present.

In contrast, it is estimated one in six adults in England have a common mental disorder, and one in eight people aged 16 or over screened positive for any type of personality disorder.

The study looked at those convicted of terrorism, and its findings are echoed by other work on mental health and terrorism. The emerging importance of mental health as a factor has also been seen by the Prevent programme, which tries to stop people from being radicalised in the first place.

Last year the Guardian revealed that [up to seven in 10 people referred to the scheme](#) may experience mental ill health or other vulnerabilities that could leave them susceptible to falling for propaganda from violent extremists. Those involved in Prevent believe such psychological problems are much more of a potential factor than first thought.

Terrorists whose records were examined for the study include Roshonara Choudhry, [convicted in 2010 of trying to assassinate the Labour MP Stephen Timms](#). The student wanted to die as a martyr after watching more than 100 hours of extremist video sermons on YouTube. It also studied the ERG of Darren Osborne, convicted of the [2017 attack on worshippers leaving Finsbury Park mosque](#), who self-radicalised in three weeks.

The study showed that, for those radicalised on the internet, 84% were convicted for non-attack offences such as spreading propaganda or fundraising; 16% for offences plotting violence; 85% were lone actors; 7% had suffered a head or brain injury; 75% were convicted of offences supporting the Islamist cause and 25% other ideologies, the biggest of which was fuelled by extreme rightwing beliefs.

For those radicalised primarily face to face, half had past convictions, more than a third for violence and 5% had past terrorism convictions; 19% had any sort of mental health issue or vulnerability, and 51% of these offenders were convicted for planning attacks. Only 6% were lone actors, 58% were Islamist, and 42% had other ideologies.

The report says: “For those who primarily radicalised online, the most common types of plots included the use of an improvised explosive device (IED, 65%), a bladed weapon (24%) or a vehicle (12%).

“Only the minority of plots moved from planning to the execution stage (29%), with 18% of plots successfully completed. For this pathway group, all thwarted plots were disrupted by the police or security services (100%), suggesting that the online traces of those who primarily radicalised online make it more difficult for them to progress substantially in their attacks and bring them to the attention of the police or security services more readily.

“This interpretation is also supported by the finding that attackers who primarily radicalised online were most likely to signal their attacking intent compared to the other pathway groups. These findings also counter the popular notion that the Internet helps create an undetectable threat of lone actors.”

Those radicalised online were less committed to the ideological cause, and assessed as less capable than those recruited face to face.

The three broad types of radicalisation are online, real world and a mix of both. The report finds recruits to extreme rightwing ideologies, using online forums including Iron March and Fascist Forge. An app originally designed for gamers called Discord was also sometimes used. The report notes that some incited to support Islamist terrorism were radicalised by games such as Call of Duty. The MoJ said the views expressed in the report are those of the authors and “are not necessarily shared” by the department, adding: “Nor do they represent government policy.”

French Court Convicts 8 of Aiding 2016 Terrorist Attack in Nice

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/13/world/europe/france-nice-terrorist-attack-trial.html>

Dec 13 – A French court on Tuesday found eight defendants guilty of aiding in the [terrorist attack](#) that killed **86 people** in the Mediterranean city of Nice in 2016, after a trial that offered some closure to survivors and the bereaved but did little to clarify the motives behind the massacre.

Judges convicted the main defendants, Mohamed Ghraieb and Chokri Chafroud, of participating in a terrorist conspiracy and sentenced them to 18 years in prison. Other defendants were found guilty of less-serious crimes such as arms trafficking, with sentences ranging from two to 12 years in jail.

But in the absence of [the perpetrator, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel](#), who was killed by the police at the time, the vague answers of low-level accomplices provided scant further information about the attack.





A memorial in Nice, in southern France, to the victims of the terrorist attack that killed 86 people in 2016. Credit...Andrew Testa for The New York Times

The presiding judge, Laurent Raviot, said the attack had “an obvious jihadist inspiration” because of the perpetrator’s interest in radical Islam and his determination to kill as many people as possible.

The Nice attack, which took place on the seaside Promenade des Anglais in the city, was one of the bloodiest in a series of Islamist terrorist assaults in Europe over a span of a few years — in [Paris](#), [Brussels](#), [Berlin](#) and [Barcelona](#).

For about three and a half months, hundreds of people — defendants, survivors, bereaved families, lawyers and experts — took to the stand in Paris to try to determine what had led Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel, a 31-year-old Tunisian, to swerve a 19-ton truck through crowds as they were leaving Bastille Day fireworks.

Coming on the heels of monthslong trials in the 2015 [Charlie Hebdo](#) and [Paris](#) attacks, the verdict on Tuesday was the latest in an extraordinary two-year judicial cycle that revisited events that have shaped contemporary France. The hearings often echoed broader societal debates over French identity, the [place of Islam](#) in a country that identifies itself as secular and the [balance between individual liberty and collective security](#).

“All of this crystallized in these three major trials,” said Antoine Mégie, a political scientist at the University of Rouen, adding that the testimonies in court also served to “build the memory of attacks” that [deeply traumatized France](#).

The series of high-profile terrorism trials continues elsewhere in Europe. The trial of the [2016 Brussels bombings](#), which killed 32 people, [opened last week in Belgium](#) and is expected to last until next summer.

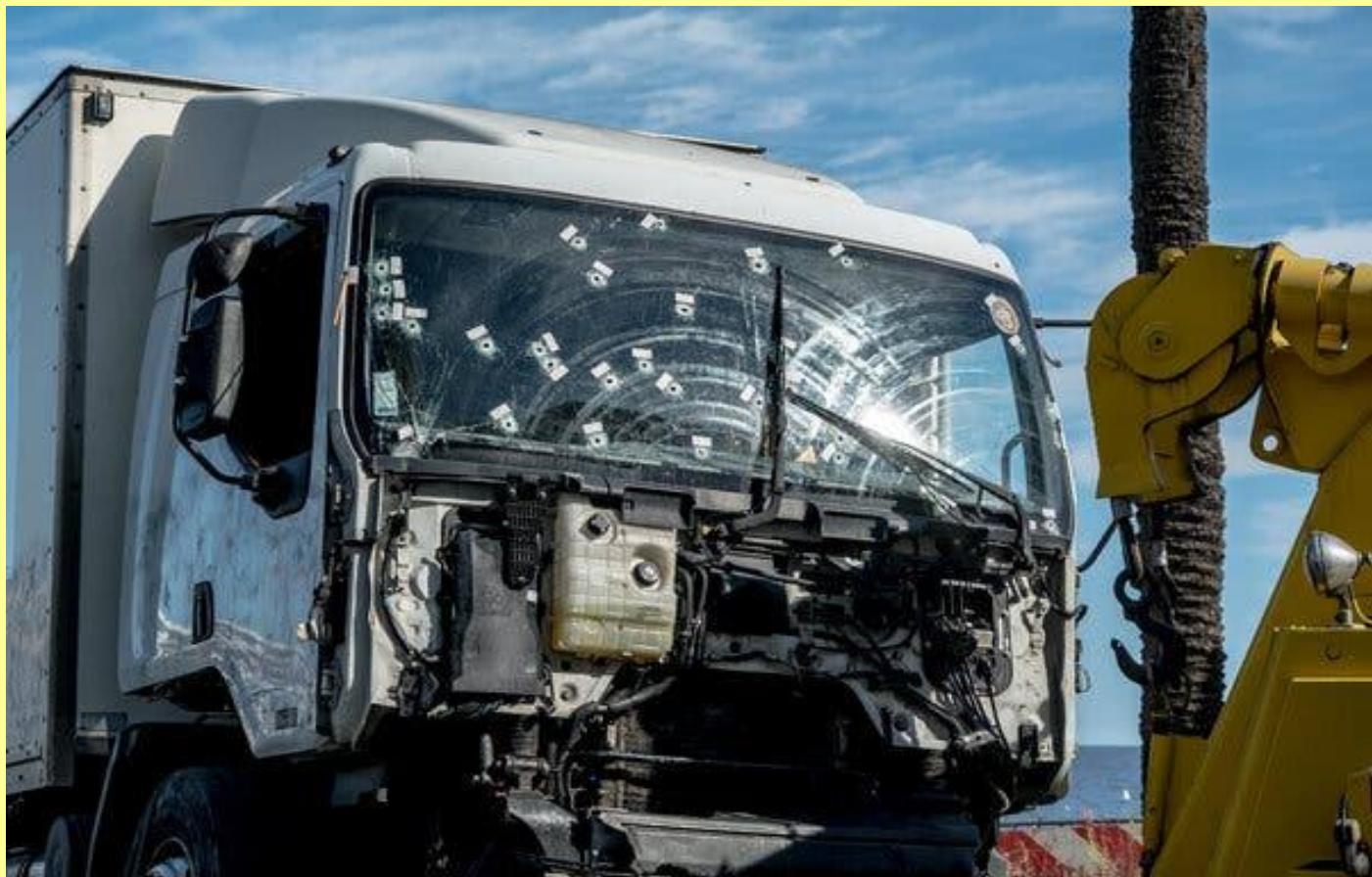
In the Paris courtroom, relatives of Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel described a man [suffering from serious psychological disorders](#), prone to domestic violence and obsessed with sex. His sister told the court, “I was really afraid of him, everyone was afraid of him.”

But none of the testimony uncovered the deeper motives behind his crime. Although the Islamic State claimed that Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel was [one of its “soldiers.”](#) Judge Raviot said there was no evidence that he was actually linked to the terrorist group.





Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel's family said that he had become interested in Islam only weeks before the attack, and investigators said that he self-radicalized within days by watching jihadist videos.



The attacker's bullet-ridden truck being moved from the scene of crime in 2016. Credit...Andrew Testa for The New York Times

The evidence given by the defendants hardly helped to clarify the picture. They were indirect accomplices, having helped Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel rent the truck and buy a gun, and they apparently had little or no clue about the preparation of the attack. Text messages that Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel sent them did not provide clear evidence that they had been aware of his intentions.

Alexa Dubourg, one of the public prosecutors, acknowledged as much in her closing speech last week. "To hold all those responsible accountable does not mean to put the burden of the absentee on the accused," she said. "What will be fair is if the sentences are proportionate to the responsibility of each person."

Judges eventually sentenced the Mr. Ghraieb and Mr. Chafroud, to slightly more jail time than the prosecutors had asked for — 18 years instead of 15. Their lawyers said they would appeal.

Ramzi Kévin Arefa, who faced life imprisonment for helping the assailant buy a gun while already convicted of an unrelated crime, was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Judges considered that he was not aware of Mr. Lahouaiej Bouhlel's criminal intentions.

"Justice did the right thing," said a tearful Caroline Villani, a bereaved family member who was concerned about possible light sentences. "I'm relieved."

Ms. Villani wore pins showing the faces of the loved ones she lost — her son, her brother, her mother and her mother's partner — attached to the right side of her coat.

Célia Viale, a 28-year-old artist who lost her mother in the attack and who is the vice president of a victims' support group, [Promenade of the Angels](#), said the proceedings had enabled "a recognition of what we've been through."

"I can move on," she said.

During the trial, lengthy hearings were held for the testimonies of survivors and families of the victims, plunging the court into five weeks of heartbreakening suffering. Apart from those killed, hundreds more were wounded in the attack. Some witnesses described the crushed bodies lying on the promenade and





desperately searching for a parent's missing limb. Others recounted the agonizing wait to learn that a loved one had been among the victims and the difficult, if not impossible, path to recovery.

Some of the family members and survivors did not hide the hatred they feel toward the defendants. Many also expressed resentment at what they described as a cumbersome and harrowing process to obtain compensation from France's official victims' fund.



4,7 years per victim!

A sculpture commemorating the victims of the Nice attack on the Promenade des Anglais. Credit...Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

Unlike the trial for the November 2015 Paris attacks, when the court was often packed with journalists, bereaved family members, survivors and other onlookers, the hearings on the Nice attack were mostly sparsely attended. Many of the survivors have said that they are more concerned about the continuing investigation into the authorities' possible failure to provide adequate security for the Bastille Day celebration. There is also emotional fatigue among the public after two years of wrenching terrorism trials. The unprecedented legal cycle has highlighted profound changes in France that came about as a result of the attacks. In the courtrooms, France's new sweeping counterterrorism laws were questioned by defense lawyers who denounced an infringement of civil liberties. The country's uneasy relationship with Islam was highlighted by testimonies that oscillated between lingering prejudice and calls for tolerance. Experts and politicians, including a former president, François Hollande, have warned about an evolving terrorist threat made up of isolated, self-radicalized individuals. Mr. Mégie, the University of Rouen academic, noted that the proceedings had exposed as many scars as they had healed. "These trials provided a window on our society and many of its political issues," he said.

What's ISIS Affiliate Islamic State Khorasan Province And Why Is It Fighting Taliban In Afghanistan?

Source: <https://www.outlookindia.com/international/explained-what-is-isis-affiliate-islamic-state-khorasan-province-and-why-is-it-fighting-taliban-in-afghanistan-news-244729>

Dec 13 – The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) claimed responsibility for the attack on a Chinese hotel in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on Monday. Though the ISKP attack did not cause much harm, as only





two hotel guests were injured, it was significant as it marked the first major attack on Chinese interests in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The attack was also the latest in the long line of attacks, including bombings, suspected to have been carried out by ISKP in which dozens have died in recent months. The ISKP is opposed to the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and is therefore lodged in a tussle with it. Here we explain what's ISKP and its ideology, why is it fighting the Taliban, and how it exposes Taliban's failure to consolidate its hold on Afghanistan.

What's Islamic State Khorasan³ Province (ISKP)?

The Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) is the regional affiliate —kind of a branch— of the global terrorist group ISIS. In ISIS parlance, ISKP and other similar groups in other parts of the world are called "wilayah", which means a province. In ISIS organisation, the central leadership serves as the head of the global ISIS state that it calls the Caliphate and affiliates like ISKP are its provinces. Its provinces are named after historical regions, not present-day nation states. This is why it's "Khorasan Province" and not "Afghanistan Province" as Khorasan was historically a vast area comprising parts of Iran, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan. Much like ISIS, ISKP was also formed when offshoots of other terror organisations converged.



Formation of ISIS in Iraq, ISKP in Afghanistan

ISIS was formed in 2005 by Abu Musal al-Zarkawi, who was previously an Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq. He left Al-Qaeda to start ISIS. "By 2005, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was a potent force...Seeking to grow, Zarqawi merged with the Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC), a network of other jihadi groups, and the newly founded army became the Islamic State in Iraq (ISIS) — the direct precursor to ISIS," notes journalist Benjamin Hall in his book *Inside ISIS: The Brutal Rise Of A Terrorist Army*. ISKP was formally formed as an ISIS province 2015 when jihadists from a number of Islamist groups in Afghanistan-Pakistan region converged. "ISKP emerged in 2014 with the defection of Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), Al-Qaeda, and Taliban fighters active in Afghanistan and Pakistan....In January 2015, these efforts were formalised when the Islamic State announced the formation of its 'Khorasan' province," notes Catrina Doxsee of Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Ideology of ISKP, differences with Taliban

The ISIS is a Salafist jihadist organisation and ISKP also subscribes to this ideology.

The ISIS stands for Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. It's also at times called ISIL — Islamic State of Iraq and Levant.

The Caliphate is the name of the Islamic kingdoms in early Islamic age by rulers called Caliphs. The ISIS seeks to recreate that with terrorist means.

"ISIL's stated goal is to solidify and expand its control of territory once ruled by early Muslim caliphs and to govern through implementation of its strict interpretation of sharia. The group's strength and expansionary agenda pose an increasing threat to US regional allies and US facilities and personnel in the Middle East as well as in the West," notes US National Counterterrorism Center. While both ISIS—and its affiliate ISKP—and the Taliban believe in a very strict implementation of Islamic law of Sharia, there is a difference between the two organisations, the Taliban is a nationalist organisation with the objective of an Islamic state in Afghanistan

³ Greater Khorāsān, or Khorāsān is a historical eastern region in the Iranian Plateau between Western and Central Asia. The name *Khorāsān* is Persian and means "where the sun arrives from" or "the Eastern Province". The name was first given to the eastern province of Persia during the Sasanian Empire and was used from the late Middle Ages in distinction to neighbouring [Transoxiana](#). Greater Khorasan is today sometimes used to distinguish the larger historical region from the former Khorasan Province of Iran (1906–2004), which roughly encompassed the western half of the historical Greater Khorasan. (Source: Wikipedia)





called the Emirate. The ISIS, on the other hand, is a globalist organisation with the objective of establishing a global Islamic state called the Caliphate.

Though there are deeper ideological differences between the Taliban and the ISIS, this is the main difference between the two.

As the Taliban negotiated with the United States, the ISIS rejects Taliban-rule in Afghanistan.

Asfandyar Mir of Wilson Center explains further: "ISIS-K subscribes to the Jihadi-Salafism ideology — and plays up the 'purity' of its anti-idolatry credentials. The Taliban, on the other hand, subscribe to an alternative Sunni Islamic sectarian school, the Hanafi madhhab, which ISIS-K regards as deficient. The two groups also differ over the role of nationalism. ISIS-K fiercely rejects it, which runs counter to the Afghan Taliban's aims of ruling over Afghanistan."

ISKP bloody campaign in Afghanistan

Several hundreds have been killed in ISKP attacks since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

While bombings are the most visible ISKP actions, it's also waging quieter ethnic violence in Afghanistan.

Though opposition to Taliban is central to ISKP, it's also committed to the broader ISIS objective of harming non-believers.

"Advocating for mass-casualty attacks against civilians and states, the group [ISKP] intended to topple the Pakistani government, punish the Iranian government for being a 'vanguard' of Shias, and 'purify' Afghanistan — both by dislodging the Afghan Taliban as the main jihadi movement in Afghanistan and punishing minority groups, like the Hazaras," notes Wilson Center's Mir.

The ISIS also has a key difference with another globalist terror group Al-Qaeda. It's scope of enemies is broader.

"Although both groups advocate a violent struggle against the 'far enemy' (the West), the Islamic State also emphasizes fighting the 'near enemy' (apostates in the region). The Islamic State operates under a global offensive jihad to rid its territory of both foreign infidels—nonbelievers of Islam—and apostates and endorses violence against the local community if they object to the adherence to sharia and do not conform to Islamic State dogma. For example, ISKP has launched numerous attacks on members of Afghanistan's Hazara Shia minority," notes Catrina of CSIS.

At least 700 Hazaras have been killed in ISKP attacks since the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, says Human Rights Watch. Besides these killings, there have been several high-profile bombings in which ISKP has been suspected to be involved.

Dozens of people have been killed in several attacks in Afghanistan in recent months. Attacks have also taken place inside Kabul's diplomatic enclave.

On December 2, Pakistani envoy in Kabul survived an assassination attempt when gunmen targeted him inside the Pakistan embassy in Kabul.

In September, an explosion at Russian embassy in Kabul killed two people and caused another 15-20 casualties.

"Two members of the diplomatic mission were killed and there are also victims among Afghan citizens," said the Russian Foreign Ministry in a tweet at the time.

Though there have been several other attacks, the attacks at diplomatic missions highlight the Taliban failure to ensure security as embassies are based within diplomatic enclaves in national capital which are supposed to be among the most secure places in the country.

In September, a coaching centre was the site of a bombing in which at least 35 were killed, most of them young students taking preparatory exams.

In September, another attack in a mosque in Herat killed 18 people.

In August, a bomb blast in a mosque in Kabul killed 21 people and injured 33, according to BBC. The mosque's emir was also killed in the blast.

In July, two civilians were killed in a blast in Kabul International Cricket Stadium during a league match. It was said to be a hand grenade attack. Thirteen people were also wounded in the attack.

In June, ISKP took the responsibility of an attack on a Sikh gurdwara in Kabul in which two people were killed.

ISKP a challenge to Taliban

Earlier, the Taliban was lodged in a bloody war with the West-backed Kabul government in Afghanistan. Since taking over Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban has had no such war. Ideally, Afghanistan should have been calm as the principal warring faction had won and no challenger was in the field. To be fair, Afghanistan is relatively calm but ISKP is shattering that calmness very frequently.

Just like the Taliban waged an insurgency against the West-backed Kabul government, the ISKP is waging the insurgency against the Taliban regime. Though the scale of ISKP challenge to the Taliban is nowhere near to the challenge that the Taliban posed to the earlier Kabul government. Even if not equal, it's a substantial challenge. It keeps exposing the weak hold of Taliban over Afghanistan and its failure to ensure security.



Did Ohio Just Elect the Next Ilhan Omar?

By Benjamin Baird

Source: <https://www.meforum.org/63902/did-ohio-just-elect-the-next-ilhan-omar>

Dec 14 – As the first Somali Muslim woman [elected](#) to the Ohio state legislature, Munira Abdullahi is [expected](#) to bring "diversity" and "new perspectives" to the Ohio House of Representatives, according to her supporters. What they don't tell you is that the 26-year-old belongs to a radical Sunni Islamist organization that uses [youth indoctrination](#), charity, and social work to grow its [political power](#) and spread theocratic, often illiberal views.



Based on her background and career trajectory, Abdullahi could feasibly become the next Ilhan Omar — Minnesota's far-left congresswoman known for expressing radical, antisemitic [opinions](#) and [consorting](#) with various [Islamist groups](#). Indeed, the Ohio legislator shares striking similarities with Omar, the [first](#) Somali Muslim elected to her state's legislature in 2016 and the first Muslim woman elected to Congress.

Munira Abdullahi (left) [boasted](#) on social media of meeting the "legendary" Rep. Ilhan Omar (right) in September 2022.

Both women fled their country in times of war and lived at [refugee camps](#) in [Kenya](#) before settling in the United States. Omar and Abdullahi each began careers as [community activists](#) before moving on to their state legislatures. They both represent districts that have transformed in recent years into Somali enclaves,

where [poverty](#), [crime](#), and [terrorist recruitment](#) have stifled integration and development.

The pair were [photographed](#) meeting for the first time in September. Abdullahi referred to her role model as the "legendary" Ilhan Omar.

Employed and funded by Islamist Group

Omar, who will soon be a third-term congresswoman, works closely with American [Islamist organizations](#) and is known to advance [legislation](#) on their behalf. For her part, Abdullahi doesn't just associate with extremist groups — she is a card-carrying member of the Muslim American Society, a notoriously extreme Islamist group that the United Arab Emirates designated as a [terrorist organization](#) in 2014.

In fact, MAS is the "overt arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in America," according to [federal prosecutors](#), or the U.S. branch of a global, pan-Islamic organization known for its violent history in the Middle East. Since 2012, Abdullahi has [worked](#) part-time as a youth director at MAS-Columbus, and she was [promoted](#) in March to the role of program manager at the national office.

Abdullahi is not just employed by MAS. She also accepted [campaign donations](#) from MAS officials. In September, the representative-elect even [redirected campaign funds](#) to her employer, raising serious concerns about how she might use her public office to benefit a controversial Islamist group.

MAS officially denies belonging to an international Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) network. However, a 2004 *Chicago Tribune* [report](#) citing internal memos and the accounts of early MAS leaders found that members voted early on to purposefully obscure the group's ties to the broader Islamist movement.

With just [3 or 4 million](#) Muslims living in America, the Muslim Brotherhood understands that its grand vision of establishing Islamic governments may have to wait. In the meantime, MAS prefers to "convert Americans to Islam and elect like-minded Muslims to political office," according to a former member. Despite these theocratic goals, Abdullahi is convinced that Christian conservatives — and not Islamists — represent a threat to religious freedom in America. "They [conservatives] want to put church into state," she said during a September [podcast](#). "Conservatives operate on a sense where they will force you to follow their beliefs," she continued. "That's not how Islam works, and that's not how





Muslims work in a country where this is not an Islamic country, so we can't legislate people based on our beliefs." In particular, the Columbus chapter of MAS, which Abdullahi calls home, is known for its close ties to international Muslim Brotherhood figures. From its earliest years, MAS-Columbus came under the sway of [Salah Soltan](#), a senior Muslim Brotherhood leader from Egypt who sat on the Columbus board from 2000 to 2004. Soltan has [issued a fatwa](#) (religious ruling) legalizing the killing of Jews in Egypt and has [accused](#) Jews of using Christian blood in religious rituals. During his time at MAS-Columbus, the group published a Q&A on its [website](#) claiming "the Jews have occupied Palestine, they will never remain there forever," and "the evil within themselves is beyond description."

MAS-Columbus continues to be a stopping point for Muslim Brotherhood dignitaries visiting the U.S. In January 2017, Sheikh Mohamed Jabril, the [Supreme Guide](#) of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who was banned from preaching in his home country, visited the MAS mosque in Columbus. Abdullahi did not respond to questions about her job at MAS or her future with the organization.

Raising Up 'Revolutionaries'

Since her November victory, the Somali American legislator continues to [promote](#) MAS activities, including a Columbus chapter [event](#) called "Reviving the Revolutionaries." Aimed at Muslim youth, the conference featured two instructors from the notorious Al Maghrib Institute, a "non-profit college" where at least five [former students](#) have been arrested for joining or supporting terrorist entities. Abdullahi [admitted](#) she was "Very excited" for this event, which also featured Asad Zaman, the director of MAS-Minnesota and a prolific antisemite who has promoted [neo-Nazi](#) and [Hamas](#) websites. A [picture](#) from the conference shows Abdullahi seated next to Zaman. Abdullahi's role as a youth director at MAS-Columbus would not necessarily insulate her from the organization's brazen displays of extremism. In 2019, the nearby Philadelphia chapter of MAS sparked a citywide [investigation](#) after videos emerged of MAS schoolchildren singing jubilantly about beheading Jews, serving as "martyrs," and "liberating" the Islamic holy site in Jerusalem. Abdullahi's political ascent may have ramifications that reach far beyond Central Ohio. Just as Omar transitioned from the state legislature to U.S. Congress, Abdullahi may use her time in state government as a steppingstone to higher office.

This is "the model," according to [Mohammed Missouri](#) of Jetpac, an Islamist civic action group that celebrated Abdullahi's election victory in a [press release](#). "Today's state legislator is tomorrow's member of Congress," he told [Time](#), adding that Muslim lawmakers such as Omar "didn't come out of nowhere ... they spent years building community trust ... and then when they decided to run for Congress people knew who they were." Abdullahi did not "come out of nowhere" either. She spent the last decade working for a Muslim Brotherhood proxy that is known to radicalize Muslim youth and isolate Islamic communities.

Yet if Omar's career path provides any indication of what to expect, Abdullahi may just be getting started.

Benjamin Baird is the director of Islamism in Politics, a project of the Middle East Forum.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Twenty-six years old congresswoman? How come Americans elect a person⁴ who has never worked in real life with practically no experience and all to represent them? Tragic!

More than 42,400 ISIS-linked foreigners remain stuck in northeast Syria: HRW

Source: <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/30222-More-than-42,400-ISIS-linked-foreigners-remain-stuck-in-northeast-Syria:-HRW>

Dec 16 – Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Thursday [said](#) that more than 42,400 foreigners accused of Islamic State (ISIS) links remain abandoned by their countries in camps and prisons in northeast Syria despite increased repatriations of women and children in recent months.

The HRW said that the Kurdish-led authorities are holding the detainees, most of them children, along with 23,200 Syrians in life-threatening conditions.

Furthermore, HRW said that recent Turkish air and artillery strikes have compounded the danger in northeast Syria.

⁴ [Munira](#) grew up in the heart of Columbus, graduating from Columbus Alternative High School(CAHS). She received her Political Science and International Relations degree from the Ohio State University. She began her career working in a nonprofit advocating for and promoting youth development, leadership, and community service. As a person with type-1 diabetes, Munira is passionate about making sure healthcare and medications are affordable so one will experience the struggles she experienced with outrageous insulin prices and medical bills.





Female security members participated in a security campaign in al-Hol camp in September (Photo: Coordination & Military Ops Center - SDF).

During the strikes in November, Turkey hit the vicinity of the Jerkin prison in Qamishlo, which holds hundreds of ISIS detainees, and killed eight guards of the al-Hol camp.

"But even before Turkey's attacks, at least 42 people had been killed during 2022 in al-Hol, the largest camp, some by ISIS loyalists. Hundreds of others were killed in an attempted ISIS prison break in January," HRW said.

Furthermore, children have drowned in sewage pits, died in tent fires, and been run over by water trucks, and hundreds have died from treatable illnesses, staff, aid workers, and detainees said.

"Nearly four years on, countries have run out of excuses for refusing to help their citizens trapped in life-threatening conditions in northeast Syria," Letta Tayler, associate director of the Crisis and Conflict Division at Human Rights Watch, told Kurdistan 24.

"Governments that make it difficult for their nationals to come home may be complicit in their unlawful detention."

The al-Hol and Roj camp hosts thousands of local and foreign ISIS families. Moreover, there are thousands of male ISIS detainees in prisons.

The SDF has repeatedly called on foreign countries to repatriate their citizens.

Perspectives on Terrorism

Volume XVI, Issue 6 / December 2022

Source: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/perspectives-on-terrorism/archives/2022#volume-xvi-issue-6>



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Leiden

This is a **Special Issue on Anti-Government Extremism**, guest edited by Prof. Tore Bjørgo (Center for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo) and Dr. Kurt Braddock (American University, Washington, DC). They will themselves in their own opening article introduce the seven **Articles**—most of them the result of a call for papers on this topic in the December 2021 issue of PoT. The theme of anti-government extremism could hardly be more topical, following the recent discovery of a conspiracy to overthrow the German government by the so-called Reichsbürgers—a right-wing movement which also contains (former) members of police and military. While some observers might dismiss this particular incident as a farce which should not be taken too seriously, it deserves, in our view, careful attention and in-depth study, while also recognizing that this event took place too recently to be analysed in this issue. Several of the articles in this Special Issue focus



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on the situation in Germany. Not only in Germany but elsewhere in Europe and North America, elements of extreme right-wing ideologies have gone mainstream in the wake of populist demagoguery around the Covid-19 pandemic and in the wake of renewed migration pressures caused by repressive regimes, economic hardship and climate change in other parts of the world. *Perspectives on Terrorism* will publish several articles on this topic in 2023.

The **Resources** section features, in its CT-Bookshelf, four short reviews by our book reviews editor, Joshua Sinai. Our information resources editor, Judith Tinnes, offers, together with two junior colleagues, David Teiner and Darius Engel, a bibliography on Accelerationism, an important ideological driver of right-wing extremists, that seeks to make things worse in the hope that an ensuing socio-political crisis will bring them to power. Finally, Associate Editor *Berto Jongman* contributes another of his wide-ranging surveys of recent online resources on terrorism and related subjects.

In **Announcements**, our new Associate Editor for Conference Monitoring, Méryl Demunyck presents her “Conference Calendar”. At the end, the brief **About Perspectives on Terrorism** section lists the people behind the journal and their tasks. The texts of the current Special Issue of *Perspectives on Terrorism* have been finalized and formatted by *Alex Schmid* and *James Forest*, the journal’s principal editors. Editorial Assistant *Jodi Moore* handled proofreading, while the technical online launch of the December 2022 issue of our journal has been in the hands of our departing Associate Editor for IT, *Audrey J. Vrolijk* (ISGA, The Hague). We also thank *Agnes Termeer* and *Sara Kulic* at Leiden University, the Hague, for additional proofreading and formatting assistance in preparing this final issue of 2022.

Resources

[Counter-Terrorism Bookshelf: Four Books on Terrorism & Counter-Terrorism-Related Subjects](#)

Reviewed by Joshua Sinai

[Bibliography: Accelerationism](#)

Compiled and selected by Judith Tinnes, David Teiner and Darius Engel

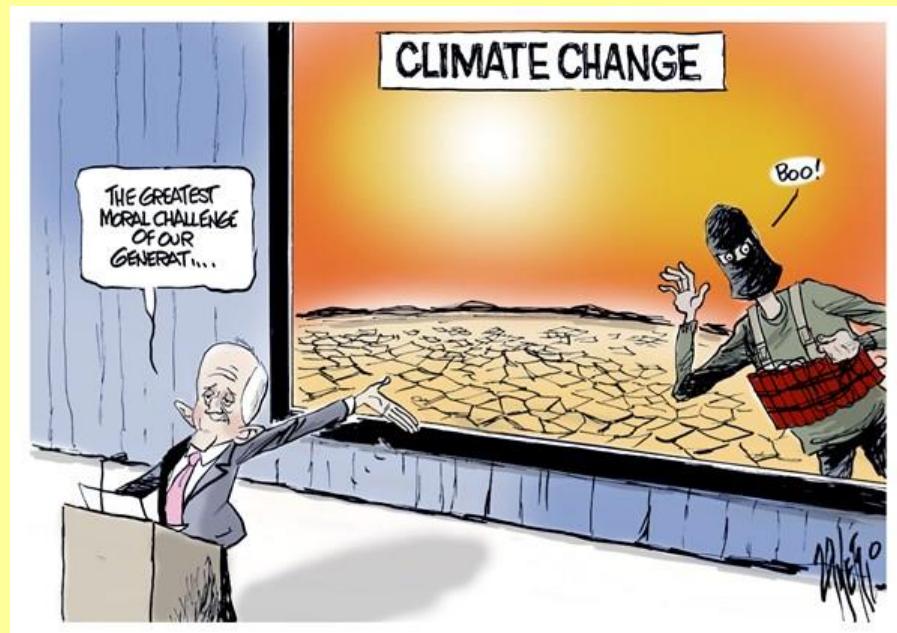
[Recent Online Resources for the Analysis of Terrorism and Related Subjects](#)

Compiled and selected by Berto Jongman

COUNTER
EXTREMISM
PROJECT

◀ The CounterPoint Blog

Afghanistan Terrorism Report: November 2022



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CHIEM NEWS



Chemical weapons against Kurds

وزیری بھرگری دھولھتی تورک جاریکی دیکھ دان به
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روزنيوز - ناوندی هاو آنکان 4:10:16 pm 23/11/2022 —



Nov 23 – Turkish Defense Minister: “We only use riot control agents to protect people!” – IN CONFINED SPACES? Really?

Military personal protective equipment (PPE) Market is expected to witness Incredible Growth during 2021-2031

Source: <https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/military-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-market-is-expected-to-witness-incredible-growth-during-2021-2031>

Nov 23 – Global Military personal protective equipment (PPE) report from Global Insight Services is the single authoritative source of intelligence on [Military personal protective equipment \(PPE\) market](#). The report will provide you with analysis of impact of latest market disruptions such as Russia-Ukraine war and Covid-19 on the market. Report provides qualitative analysis of the market using various frameworks such as Porters' and PESTLE analysis. Report includes in-depth segmentation and market size data by categories, product types, applications, and geographies. Report also includes comprehensive analysis of key issues, trends and drivers, restraints and challenges, competitive landscape, as well as recent events such as M&A activities in the market.

Military personal protective equipment (PPE) is gear worn by soldiers to protect them from the dangers of the battlefield. It can include items such as body armor, helmet, gas mask, and night vision goggles. PPE is essential for soldiers to stay safe and fight effectively.

Key Trends

Some of the key trends in military personal protective equipment technology include the development of lighter and more comfortable body armor, the use of nanotechnology to create stronger and more durable materials, and the integration of personal protective equipment into soldiers' uniforms.





Market Segmentation

The global military personal protective market is segmented by product type, material type, application, end user, and region. By product type, the market is divided into body armor, helmet, protective eyewear, life safety jacket and others. By material of equipment, the market is categorized into Aramid, Carbon fiber, and Ultra-High-Molecular-Weight Polyethylene (UHMWPE) fiber. By application, the market is segmented into combat and training purposes. By region, it is studied across North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and rest of the world.

Key Players

The leading manufacturers of personal protective equipment for the military are Revision Military, SEYNTEX, Avon Protection Systems, Inc., BAE Systems, DuPont, Eye Safety Systems, Top-Skin, SM Carapace, Original S.W.A.T. and Australian Defense Apparel.

Key Drivers

The key drivers of the military personal protective equipment market are the increasing terrorism and insurgency activities across the globe, the ongoing military modernization programs, and the increasing defense budgets of various countries.

With the increasing terrorism and insurgency activities, there is a growing demand for personal protective equipment that can provide soldiers with adequate protection against small arms fire, improvised explosive devices, and chemical and biological warfare agents.

W.Va. National Guard helps Qatar provide security for World Cup tournament



By Rick Steelhammer rsteelhammer@hdmediallc.com Nov 23, 2022



Members of the West Virginia National Guard conduct a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN) training exercise with members of the Qatar Weapons of Mass Destruction Unit and Qatar Military Medical Service at the University of Charleston Stadium on March 27. The exercise wrapped up three weeks of CBRN training as the Qatari Armed Forces prepare to support the FIFA 2022 World Cup soccer tournament.

Courtesy of the West Virginia National Guard



EDITOR'S COMMENT: First Turkish military CBRN; then West Virginia National Guard CBRN plus Qatar WMD Unit. What about something called “interoperability” and “compatibility of equipment”? During the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens NATO provided its CBRN Battalion to support our own CBRN units (including mine at the Army General Hospital in Athens). But they deployed in a city approximately 80Km away from Athens and never paid a courtesy visit to see what we have and how we do things and vice versa.

Top Turkish doctor says her arrest due to chemical weapons remarks ‘attempt to silence society’

Source: <https://stockholmcf.org/top-turkish-doctor-says-her-arrest-due-to-chemical-weapons-remarks-attempt-to-silence-society/>

Nov 24 – The head of a leading doctors union in Turkey who was arrested on terrorist propaganda charges last month has said that her imprisonment is an attempt by the Turkish government to silence society and that she's facing a “political” process, not a legal one, [Turkish Minute](#) reported, citing the BBC Turkish service. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, 63, chairperson of the Turkish Medical Association (TTB), a forensic expert and a prominent human rights activist, was taken into custody at her home in Istanbul on Oct. 26 and arrested in Ankara, where she was brought for questioning, the next day. Fincancı, whose arrest was prompted by a call she made urging a probe into the Turkish army's alleged use of chemical weapons against Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, answered questions posed by BBC from Sincan Prison in Ankara through her lawyers. When asked to comment on the accusations against her, Fincancı said she was facing a political process and not a legal one since arresting someone pending trial on terrorist propaganda charges was “not acceptable” in terms of the law and that her returning from abroad after learning about the investigation into her showed that there's no reason to suspect that she poses a flight risk. “There is an allegation. Defining a call [for a probe] as a crime and letting it lead to a house raid and arrest should be considered an attempt to silence the society, not me,” she added, referring to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which is accused by many of silencing dissent. Regarding her criticism of Medya Haber TV, during a live broadcast on which she talked about the allegations, Fincancı said she accused them of breaking her comments into pieces and using them in other broadcasts detached from their context and with additional commentary that caused her to sound like she was accusing Turkish army of using chemical weapons. When asked about criticism voiced by her colleagues, who said she should have been more careful when choosing the press outlet to make such comments to because she is the head of the country's leading doctors union, Fincancı said while she understood her colleagues' concerns, she also hoped they understand that, as a human rights defender, she can't ask about the editorial stance of a media outlet since it would be a violation of its freedom of expression and the public's right to information. “Moreover, I expect the society and my colleagues to also question the censorship of a significant part of the press, including some of the opposition channels, of me,” she added. Fincancı also said, regarding the conditions at Sincan Prison, that she was “quite comfortable” and alone in a large ward where there's ample ventilation. She added, however, that there was an environment of serious isolation, where prison guards prevent the inmates from seeing or greeting one another when they are meeting with their lawyers. The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into Fincancı on charges of disseminating terrorist propaganda and insulting the state due to her remarks about the Turkish Armed Forces' (TSK) alleged use of chemical weapons against militants from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq. Fincancı said she had examined video images and called for a probe. Turkey has strongly rejected the allegations that appeared in media outlets close to the PKK that its army was using chemical weapons in its counterterrorism operations in northern Iraq. The PKK is listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and much of the international community.



North Korea Helped Iran, Hezbollah Bring Chemical Weapons to Lebanon

By Hana Levi Julian

Source: <https://www.jewishpress.com/news/middle-east/syria/north-korea-helped-iran-hezbollah-bring-chemical-weapons-to-lebanon/2022/11/24/>

Nov 24 – North Korea is stepping up its activity in the Middle East, with experts from the Hermit Kingdom actively helping Iran supply its Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah, with hundreds of chemical weapons in

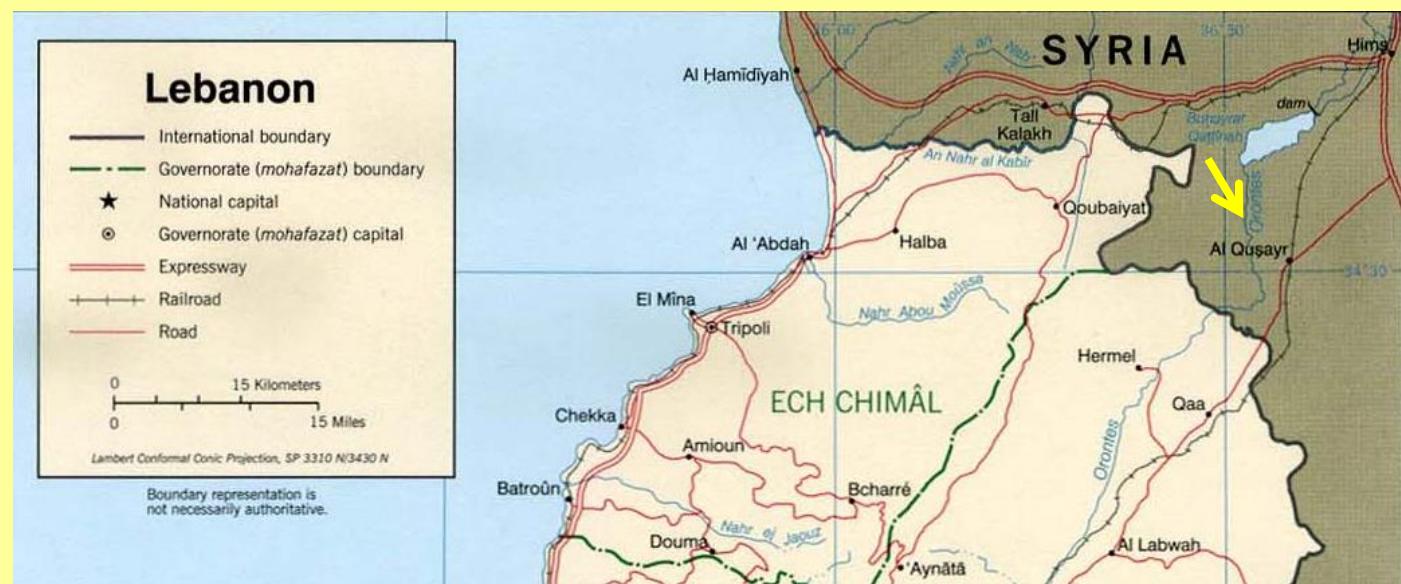


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Lebanon, according to a report earlier this week by the Saudi *al Hadath* newspaper later verified by Fox News.

More than 300 Fateh missiles (photo below) and 110 Fajr missiles, all of them carrying warheads filled with thionyl chloride, were surreptitiously transported in non-military vehicles by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from a research center in Masyaf to a site near the town of al-Qaseir in northern Lebanon.

Masyaf has been the focus of repeated Israeli attacks on Iranian military sites.



North Korean experts reportedly injected the thionyl chloride into the missiles under the supervision of Iranian chemical weapons expert Qassem Abdullah Massoudyan, according to the report, which was [confirmed by Fox News](#).

Thionyl chloride is listed under the Chemical Weapons Convention because it can also be used to produce chemical weapons.

The chemical is very corrosive to the eyes, skin, and respiratory tract and “reacts violently with water,” according to a [report](#) by the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization and the European Commission.

North Korea has also recently joined its ally Iran in secretly supplying weapons to Russia for its war on Ukraine, and continues to improve and upgrade its ballistic missiles in violation of United Nations sanctions.

Last week, Pyongyang test-fired a suspected intercontinental ballistic missile along with multiple other ballistic missiles — including one that triggered an air raid alert for residents of central and northern Japan. One day earlier, North Korea launched 23 short-range missiles at different times from both of its coasts.



Iran Helping Hezbollah Acquire ‘Game-Changing’ Weapons

“Despite the severe unrest, humanitarian crises and the unraveling of the Lebanese state, Hezbollah continues to focus its resources on acquiring and developing game-changing military capabilities that it intends to deploy against Israel, directly funded by Iran,” IDF Brigadier-General (ret) Amir Avivi told Fox News. Avivi, CEO and founder of the Israel Defense and Security Forum, warned that the recent maritime border deal signed between Israel and Lebanon has exacerbated the threat against Israel. “The gas deal signed between Lebanon and Israel during the last seconds of the outgoing interim Israeli government weakened Israeli deterrence and has emboldened Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies, who saw Israel folding under the threat of military force,” Avivi warned.

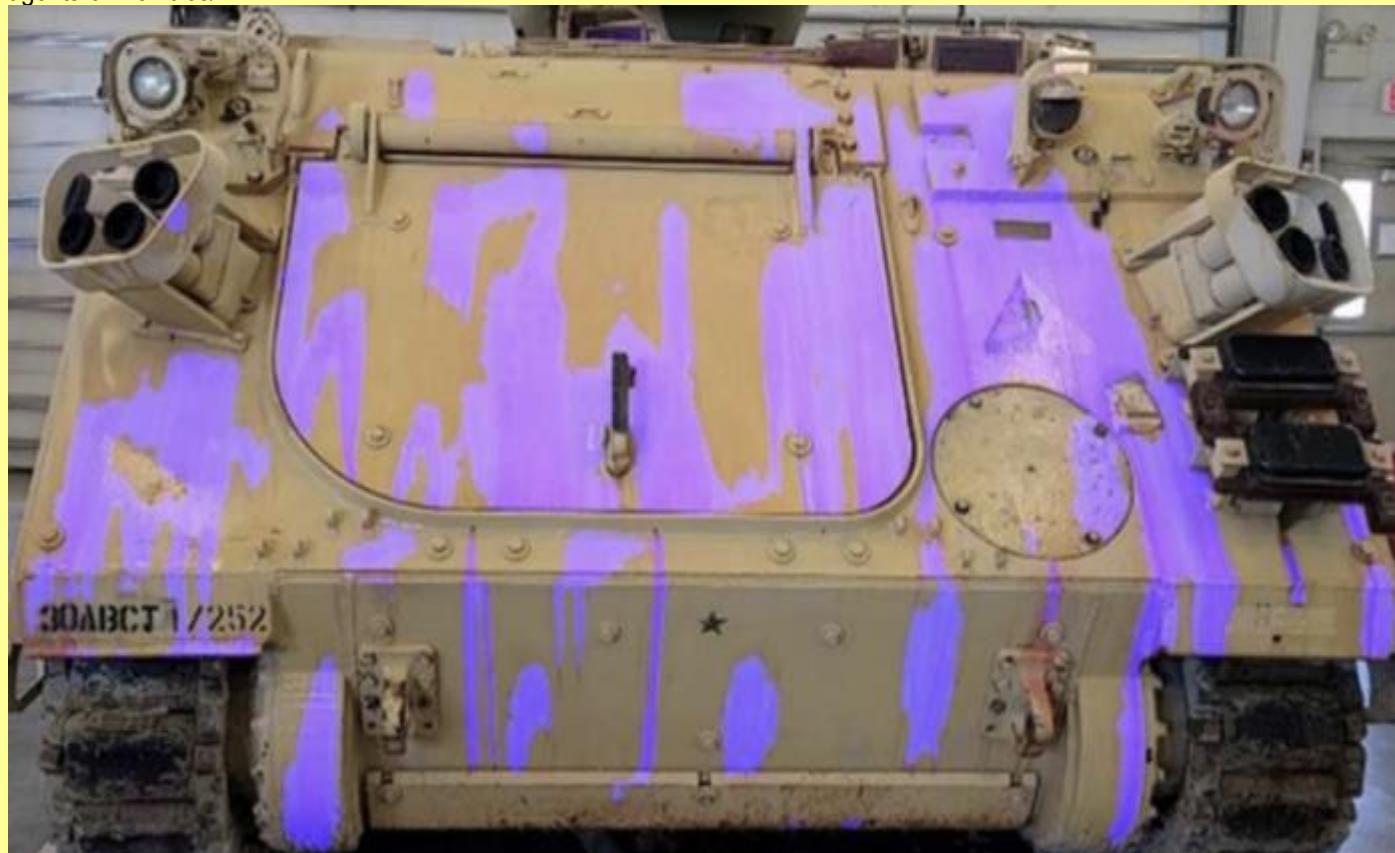
“Stopping a Shiite terror organization from obtaining chemical weapons is first and foremost an Israeli priority, but the US and Europe should be almost equally concerned with the proliferation of unconventional weapons – and act accordingly.”

Hana Levi Julian is a Middle East news analyst with a degree in Mass Communication and Journalism from Southern Connecticut State University. A past columnist with The Jewish Press and senior editor at Arutz 7, Ms. Julian has written for Babble.com, Chabad.org and other media outlets, in addition to her years working in broadcast journalism.

EDITOR’S COMMENT: I do not know how accurate the above info is since the destination city of al-Qaseir is not in Northern Lebanon but in Southern Syria. But you know that geography can change easily and on purpose ...

Autonomous System to Detect, Clean Chemical or Biological Warfare Agents on Vehicles

Source: <https://www.hstoday.us/industry/emerging-innovation/autonomous-system-to-detect-clean-chemical-or-biological-warfare-agents-on-vehicles/>



Artificial intelligence computer vision algorithms are under development to automatically recognize the positive CIDAS signal and create a 2D and 3D digital contamination map on the vehicle surface. The contamination map is indicated by the purple overlay on the image and the map can be shared across tactical networks to confirm vehicle decontamination and clearance. (U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center photo)





Nov 26 – Officials at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency are developing an autonomous robotic system that identifies and maps chemical or biological warfare agent (CWA/BWA) contamination on vehicle surfaces, then decontaminates the surfaces, and clears that vehicle for unrestricted use by the Joint Force.

"After being contaminated with CWA/BWA, large equipment must be thoroughly decontaminated to the lowest field-detectable level for it to be cleared for safe, unrestricted operations," said William Buechter, Science and Technology Manager at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's (DTRA) Chemical and Biological Technologies Department that serves as the Joint Science and Technology Office (JSTO) for the Defense Department's Chemical and Biological Defense Program "These decontamination operations require a large, designated area and immense logistic support such as water, decontaminants, and intensive manpower," Buechter added. "There is also the risk of spreading contamination during decontamination operations."

DTRA JSTO is working with researchers from the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Chemical Biological Center (DEVCOM CBC), Ground Vehicle Systems Center, and Army Research Laboratory to develop the Autonomous Decontamination System (ADS) for equipment and wide-area decontamination.

The ADS will be a robotic platform based on the Multi-Utility Tactical Transport – eXpanded Mobility (MUTT-XM) Utility Ground Vehicle produced by General Dynamics Land Systems.

Current U.S. Army doctrine for thorough equipment decontamination demands heavy labor and logistics support. The ADS based on the MUTT-XM will benefit the Joint Service by enabling autonomous decontamination for mission-critical equipment, air platforms, and ground platforms.

"ADS will mitigate chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear contamination using multiple, scalable processes that reduce the hazard, manpower, and time and resources, and increase commanders' flexibility to support multi-domain operations," Buechter said.

"This is another technology developed by DTRA JSTO to deter, prevent, and prevail against chemical and biological threats against the Joint Force, nation, and our allies," said Eric Lowenstein, Acting Deputy Director, DTRA JSTO.

Nano-based wearable textile sensors: A review on latest developments

By Albana Halili^{1,2}, Ilda Kazani², and Genti Guxho²

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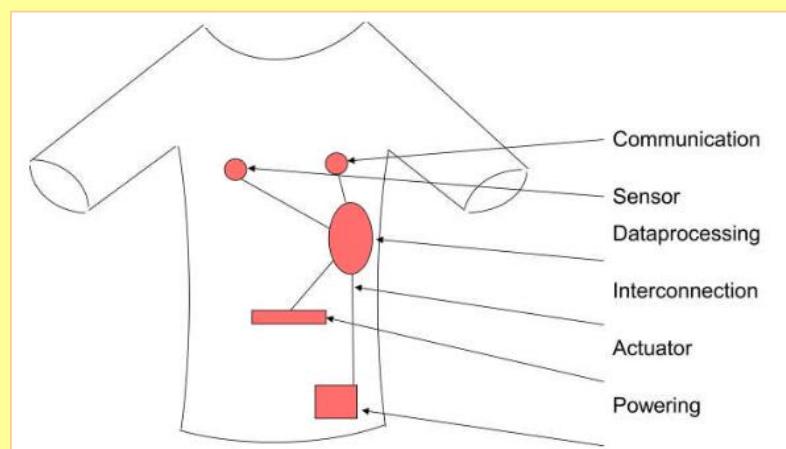
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Journal of Natural and Technical Sciences (JNTS), No 43 / 2017 (XXII), pg. 144-161

Source: https://www.academia.edu/33189737/Nano_based_Wearable_Textile_Sensors_A_Review_on_Latest_Developments

Abstract

There has been an increase in the customer demand regarding the improvement of the functionality of traditional textiles which are being used nowadays. This demand has directed researchers toward introduction of novel methods and synthesis of new materials, which have improved the properties of the existing textiles. Based on the latest achievements, new terms like 'smart textiles', 'intelligent textiles', 'wearable textiles' and 'wearable sensors or electronics' have been introduced into the textile industry in the last years. The smartness of the textiles is realized either by incorporating some active materials into the fibrous structure of by modifying the surface of the textiles in order to give specific characteristics to the textile. Thus, materials which can sense and possibly react against a certain stimulus in a predetermined way should be integrated into these smart textiles. Manipulation at nanometer level has resulted in the improvement of textile functions such as self-cleaning, actuating, antibacterial and antistatic, UV blocking, communicating and sensing abilities of the textile. Due to these new functionalities, they have found a wide range of applications especially in healthcare, defense systems, sports, and fashion as well. This paper will review the latest developments in smart textiles' area and especially focus on nanomaterial-integrated wearable textile sensors, the new added properties and their uses.





CBRN daily problems

By the Editor of the "C²BRNE Diary"



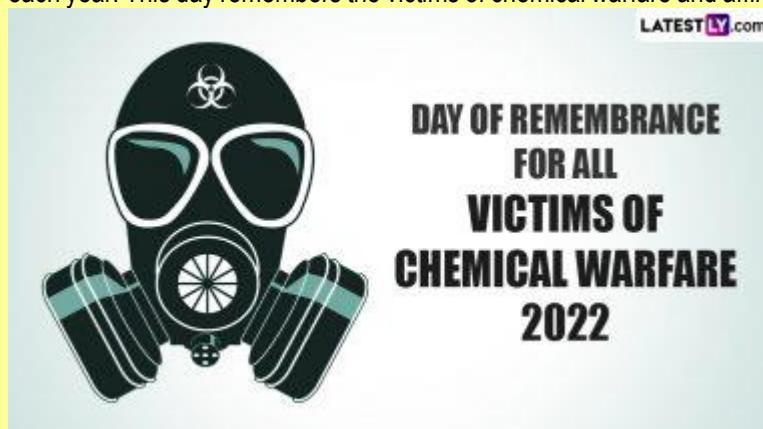
There are two problems (among others) that need to be solved. The common denominator is the escalators found in many buildings and critical infrastructure but mainly in underground metro stations. For a metaphysical reason in every terrorist attack and field drill, there is a power failure that immobilizes the escalators making the lives of CBRN first responders extremely difficult because they have to carry their equipment (usually a big trailer) and victims on stretchers (although this is not their first priority while in Level-A PPE [but also Levels -B/C]). In that respect, we have to invent a device kind of a stretcher base that can lock on the steps of the escalator when going down or up. Those who ask first responders to carry stretchers donned in Level-A for sure have never been in their shoes and should stop doing that. A similar mechanism should be used for transferring gear via the elevators. In addition, if there is no catastrophic explosion at the incident site, please restore power and ease our access to the hot zone.



Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare 2022: Know Date, History and Significance of the Global Event As Tribute to the Victims of Chemical Warfare

Source: <https://www.latestly.com/lifestyle/festivals-events/day-of-remembrance-for-all-victims-of-chemical-warfare-2022-know-date-history-and-significance-of-the-global-event-as-tribute-to-the-victims-of-chemical-warfare-4507396.html>

Nov 28 – The Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare is observed by the United Nations (UN) on November 30 each year. This day remembers the victims of chemical warfare and affirms the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' commitment to the cause and aims at promoting the goals of peace, security, and multilateralism. The day is officially recognised by the United Nations (UN) and has been observed since 2005. [International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism 2022: Know the Date, Theme & Significance of This Day To Honour the Victims.](#)



History of Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

As per historical records, during the last day of the United Nations Tenth Session of the Conference of the State Parties on November 11, 2005, the members of the UN

officially recognised the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare. This was done following a suggestion by Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General of the Secretariat. [Remembrance Day 2022 Date: Know All About History, Significance and Ways To Observe Armistice Day in Honour of Martyrs in the United States.](#)



Earlier, April 29 was chosen as the date for the event's celebration because the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on that day in 1997. However, the date was changed to November 30 (or the first day of the regular session of the Conference, when appropriate) at the 20th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2015. Meanwhile, April 29 was designated "International Day for the Foundation of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons" ("OPCW Day") instead. In 2018, UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament, outlining a vision of disarmament actions that help set our world on a path towards sustainable peace and security for all.

Significance of Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

This day aims to encourage efforts for eliminating the use of chemical weapons. The history of the serious efforts to achieve chemical disarmament ended with the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention which began more than a century ago. Chemical weapons were used on a massive scale during World War I, resulting in more than 100,000 fatalities and a million casualties. It raises awareness and focuses on the elimination of the threat of chemical weapons. In 2013, while observing the day, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon gave a speech where he stated: "On this Remembrance Day, I urge the international community to intensify efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons, along with all other weapons of mass destruction. Let us work together to bring all States under the Convention and promote its full implementation. This is how we can best honour past victims and liberate future generations from the threat of chemical weapons".

Iran calls for prosecution of U.S., German firms at OPCW meeting

Source: <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/479187/Iran-calls-for-prosecution-of-U-S-German-firms-at-OPCW-meeting>



Nov 29 – The German and American corporations that provided raw materials to Saddam Hussein's regime to build chemical weapons and use them against Iranian civilians and armed forces in the 1980s must be brought to justice, a senior Iranian diplomat asserted on Monday.

Reza Najafi, the deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, made the demands during the 27th Conference of States Parties (CSP-27) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.



The chemical arms had been first used during World War I. After four decades Iran became the second victim of such bombs. "As the greatest victim of chemical weapons in modern history, Iran neither pardons nor forgets the perpetrators and sponsors of Iraq's chemical attacks" against Iran, the deputy foreign minister remarked.

Najafi also said harsh unilateral restrictions put on Iran in violation of human rights, which have prevented chemically injured Iranian war veterans to gain access to the necessary equipment and medications, have to be lifted promptly.

"The greatest threat to regional and global peace and security comes from the Zionist regime in Israel, which is in control of numerous forms of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It is the reason why efforts to construct a Middle East (West Asia) zone free of WMDs have failed," the diplomat pointed out.

He urged the conference's participants to take action to achieve the convention's universality and create a world free of chemical weapons.

Nasser Kanaani, the spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry, appeared at a news conference on Monday carrying a chemical mask to highlight Berlin's provision of chemical weapons to the ousted Iraqi dictator and its backing for him during his war against Iran in the 1980s.

Kanaani also said Iran will not cooperate with the so-called fact-finding committee established under the German-sponsored UN Human Rights Council resolution to look into claims of human rights abuses during the recent riots in Iran. Kanaani also said Tehran has already established a national fact-finding committee to investigate the unrest in the country.

Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the Foreign Minister of Iran, has originally confirmed that Germany was the principal source of chemical weapons used against the Iranians by the former Iraqi dictator.

"Now, they are exploiting HR systems to commit further HR crimes, all in the name of a fake 'solidarity' with Iranians," Amir Abdollahian tweeted.

Ali Bahadori Jahromi, the government spokesman, has also said Germany's claims of support for human rights in Iran are politically motivated.

Germany's misdeeds against the Iranian people through political propaganda will not be absolved, he tweeted.

"A state that once helped Saddam gas Iranian men, women, and children in an Iranian city and once supported the imposition of unlawful sanctions on the Iranian country, today claims to protect human rights on political grounds," he tweeted.

Sardasht, an Iranian Kurdish city in West Azarbaijan, was the first city in the world that was attacked with chemical weapons. The citizens were gassed on June 28, 1987. In two separate bombing runs on four residential areas, around 130 people were killed immediately and 8,000 injured.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Germany again! But it was not the only one. And the story continues in our days with a collaboration with N. Korean labs. Some will never learn because we are letting them do things ...

Bin Laden's son says he made him fire AK47s and test chemical weapons on his dogs

Source: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/bin-ladens-son-says-made-28625317>



Dec 01 – [Osama Bin Laden](#)'s son says his terrorist mastermind father was training him to follow in his footsteps - and even made him [fire](#) AK47s as a child.

Now aged 41, Omar Bin Laden says his childhood in the mysterious Tora Bora cave complex was one of strife - and believes he is "another victim" of the [9/11](#) warlord.

Speaking to [The Sun](#) this week, he revealed one of his most harrowing memories from his youth was discovering that his dogs had been used to test chemical weapons.

Recalling how he watched his father and his followers use the deadly equipment

on his pets, Omar told the newspaper: "They tried it on my dogs and I wasn't happy."

"I just try to forget all the bad times as much as I can. It's very difficult. You suffer all the time."

Omar said he was also taken into Bin Laden's terrorist training camps and taught how to use an AK47 rifle as well as drive a Russian tank, with his father seemingly keen to bring him up as his successor.

But when he was old enough he instead made the brave decision to say "goodbye" and turn away from a life of terror, a decision which angered his dad.



ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

"I'd had enough of that world. He wasn't happy that I was leaving", he said.

By the time of the horrific attacks on September 11, 2001 he had already disowned his father, and felt little in the way of sadness when he was finally killed by US forces in almost a decade later.

Despite this, he admits he still would've preferred for the family to have been given a funeral - and even doubts the official narrative of a burial at sea, saying he thinks they "took his body to America, for people to see."

Omar also learnt of the death of his brother Khalid after recognising pictures of him posted on the internet following the raid.

But while he hoped the end of Bin Laden would too bring to a close the constant ill-will he received from strangers, this was not to be - as he says people "still judge me today."

Omar suffers from PTSD, according to his 67-year-old British wife Zaina, who believes it was brought on by 9/11.

Having seen multiple therapists and been prescribed medication, he shared that he has found solace by taking to painting in his adult life, with his works reported to sell for up to £8,500 a piece.

US Marine Corp 21st Century CBRN Training

How the Fort Leonard Wood CBRN Marine Corps Detachment integrated Argon's simulator detector systems into its program of instruction

Source: <https://www.argonelectronics.com/the-rise-of-21st-century-cbrn-training>

Proficiency in chemical hazard detection is a crucial aspect of CBRN reconnaissance and decontamination training for the US Marine Corps.

But being able to provide trainees with realistic training that reflects the physical and psychological complexities of real-world chemical hazard scenarios has always presented its challenges.

Traditional training methods can often lack authenticity, they can place limitations on the locations in which scenarios can be conducted and they can add a substantial administrative, regulatory, and Health and Safety consideration.

In this case study Chief Warrant Officer 5 Christopher Joy, former Commander of the CBRN Instruction Company Marine Corps Detachment at Fort Leonard Wood, explains how the introduction of simulator detector technology enriched the CBRN training experience so effectively it lead to the complete rewriting of the centre's Program of Instruction (POI).

Read this fascinating case study and learn how easily your CBRN training facility could replicate this success.



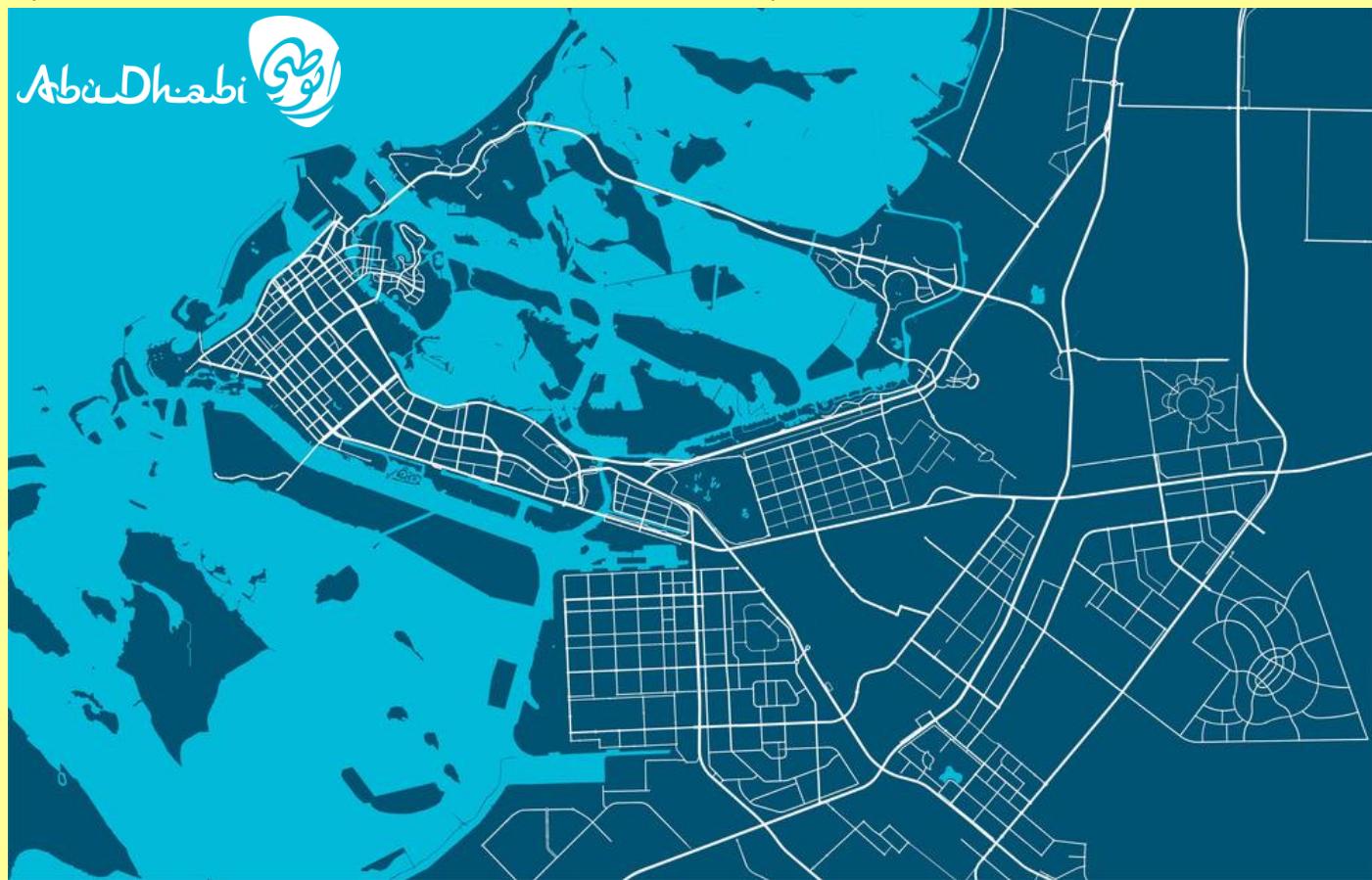
A good idea for CBRN First Responders

By the Editor of "C2BRNE Diary"





A rescue hovercraft for CBRN First Responders is a good idea when the operational terrain has many islands, shallow waters or swamps, can overcome heavy traffic and operate in mud and reach inaccessible locations while a port to dock is not necessary. The city of Abu Dhabi is a fine example where rescue hovercraft can be deployed in case of a real CBRN/HazMat incident.



Forensic aspects of crime scene investigation using CBRN agents

By Konieczny Marcin

Opolskie Studia Administracyjno-Prawne 20(1): 99–115.

Source: <https://czasopisma.uni.opole.pl/index.php/osap/article/view/4629>

Abstract

The number of crimes and acts of terror committed with the use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agents is steadily increasing. Investigative activities, including examination of the scene of an incident, is an increasingly serious challenge and many countries need to optimize their procedures. An important role for law enforcement agencies is to effectively identify the CBRN measures used and collect evidence. The on-scene investigation procedure must therefore meet high standards in terms of ensuring safety of the investigative teams, as well as gathering and preservation of evidence. Such a process requires participation of not only competent and qualified experts, but also using the latest technical solutions. In Poland, conducting forensic activities at the scene of an incident, where CBRN means were used, is based – on the one hand – on classical methods and techniques of forensics, and – on the other hand – on applying special devices designed for these works. Undoubtedly, they provide a valuable solution and enable faster and more accurate performance of specific tests. The present work offers a literature review, discussing the most important issues related to conducting activities at the site of an incident, involving chemical, radiological and biological agents. The author describes the basic attributes of a CBRN incident site, outlines investigative procedures, and discusses some of the methods of conduct that enable the use of new technologies. The work is divided into four parts: the first discusses the most important aspects of investigating the scene of an incident, the second – activities



carried out at the site of use of CBRN agents, the third – modern methods of investigating the sites of incidents using these agents, and the fourth provides a summary.

An alternative way to escape CBRN threats



Innovations for global security

By Seshadri Ramkumar

Source: <https://eu.lubbockonline.com/story/opinion/columns/2022/12/04/ramkumar-innovations-for-global-security/69684064007/>

With heightened political tensions in some regions of the world, high-tech sectors like defense, personnel protection and semiconductor are gaining due attention. Advanced textiles find applications such as decontamination wipes, body armor, medical textiles, wearables, etc.

Investment in science and technology to boost innovation and grow the economy is recognized as a high priority in the United States and United Kingdom amidst dire economic situations. The Chips Act in the United States and the recent Autumn Statement by the United Kingdom's Chancellor of Exchequer are testimonies to the necessity.

Chantilly, USA-based First Line Technology (FLT) has been working to develop multiple applications for the nonwoven wipe, "FiberTect" that can contribute to global security. FiberTect technology was invented at Texas Tech University. FiberTect is a platform technology based on its universality to wipe away different CBRN agents, as well as with the use of different fibers such as cotton, polyester, and blends as absorbent layers, depending on the application and need. Recent work by the U. S. Army has shown that FiberTect wipe can decontaminate biological toxin spores as well.

"FiberTect was one of the first patented technologies out of Texas Tech University, and through industry partnership with First Line Technology and Hobbs Bonded Fibers, it has



proven to be one of the most widely commercialized from TTU over the past two decades," stated Cameron Smith, Director of Commercialization at TTU System. FLT's continued efforts are taking FiberTect to the next level making it a universal wipe for chemical, biological and radiological protection. Recent effort by the U. S. Army has shown that FiberTect is able to efficiently wipe away toxic microbes such as bacterial spores just using the dry FiberTect wipe. This method is advocated for cold weather regions of the world where liquid freezes making wet decontamination methods inefficient, such as Siachen glacier, and other high-altitude regions. This study showed FiberTect dry wipe can decontaminate *Bacillus atrophaeus* var. *globigii* (BG) spores up to 94.93 percent. This research proves the applicability of FiberTect nonwoven wipe against biological toxins in addition to its efficacy against chemical agents like mustard gas and fentanyl particles. "FiberTect was originally developed for toxic liquid chemicals such as chemical warfare agents, but it has proven equally effective at the physical removal of fine powders like fentanyl and weaponized bio-agents," stated Corey Collings, Director of Research and Development at FLT. "There is a need to develop functional products that can sense and wipe away opioids and fentanyl products. These products although used in pain treatments are regulated items that need good control and hence there is a need to develop effective decontamination products such as wipes," stated Dr. Vaclav Trojan of the International Clinical Research Center at Brno-based Masaryk University, Czech Republic. Adsorbent and absorbent wipes like FiberTect can play vital role in wiping away fine particles that contain fentanyl compounds, added Trojan. The need for such high-tech wipes has been expressed by Dr. Jan Halamek, Director of the Institute for Forensic Science at Texas Tech University. "United States is going through unparalleled opioid crisis, where fentanyl and its analogs represent the deadliest drug threat we have ever encountered. Highly porous and absorbent wipes like FiberTect can be used as a decontamination countermeasure for fentanyl, which gives forensic scientists a tool to detect and decontaminate illicit drugs" stated Halamek. FLT is advocating "*Blot-Apply-Remove*," method that uses dry FiberTect wipe to wipe away bulk toxic agents. Small amount of reactive agent is applied followed by again wiping with FiberTect. "The highly absorptive nature of FiberTect makes it far superior to paper towels or other absorbents in this procedure," stated Corey Collings. Translating research from laboratory to marketplace is critical these days for national security, economic growth, and job creation. FiberTect is a good model for such an activity, that showcases public-private partnerships. Initial applied research was supported by the United States' government and the private sector picked-up the technology after robust evaluation by a United States' National Laboratory. "Universities are critical to the technology commercialization process, providing not only foundational research but also translational research, directly impacting the commercial market and economy with new technologies," stated Cameron Smith.

Dr. Seshadri Ramkumar is a professor in the department of environmental toxicology at Texas Tech University.

African experts enhance hospital preparedness for chemical incidents

Source: <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2022/12/african-experts-enhance-hospital-preparedness-chemical-incidents>



Dec 09—The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco co-organised a workshop on chemical incident preparedness for hospitals (HOSPREP), held in Rabat, Morocco from 7 to 10 November.





The workshop brought together medical and emergency response experts from African OPCW Member States at the Royal School of Paramedic Personnel Lalla Meryem in Rabat. The training centred on enhancing the capabilities of medical facilities to respond to incidents involving toxic chemicals or chemical warfare agents. In particular, the workshop delved into the principles of hospital care for patients injured by toxic chemicals as well as practical knowledge regarding facilities for managing casualties resulting from chemical exposure.

Participants also received lectures on key assistance and protection concepts such as: the provisions and obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) with a focus on Article X, types of chemical agents, personal protection, contamination, detection, monitoring and incident command, and medical evacuation. The course also featured a field exercise in which the participants tested their practical skills.

Director of the Royal School of Paramedic Personnel Lalla Meryem, Colonel Major Aziz Zentar, emphasised “the importance of developing safeguards to protect against, and respond to, toxic chemical incidents at home and abroad.”

The event was attended by 32 participants from 12 OPCW Member States: Angola, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Togo, and Sudan.

Background

HOSPREP is an institutional capacity-building initiative of the Technical Secretariat to strengthen the resilience of Member States' medical facilities against the threat of chemical incidents. It emphasises hospital emergency preparedness through planning and prescriptive incremental change. The initiative was implemented under the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention — known as the Africa Programme.

Under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Member States “have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information concerning means of protection against chemical weapons.”

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW, with its 193 Member States, oversees the global endeavour to permanently eliminate chemical weapons. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1997, it is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

Over 99% of all declared chemical weapon stockpiles have been destroyed under OPCW verification.

Nix wearable lets you know when to hydrate, by analyzing your sweat

Source: <https://newatlas.com/wearables/nix-hydration-biosensor-sweat/>



Dec 09 – We've heard about a number of experimental skin-worn biosensors, which analyze the wearer's sweat to monitor everything from [stress](#) to [blood glucose levels](#). Well, athletes can now actually buy one of the things, that is designed to keep them from getting dehydrated – it's called Nix.

The problem with staying hydrated lies in the fact that if you don't drink until you feel thirsty, you will already be somewhat dehydrated by that point in time. As a result, athletes tend to drink preemptively, before they get thirsty.

The only problem with that approach is that it may be difficult to gauge when and how often to drink – athletes want to stay hydrated, but they don't want to cramp up, or go through their water supply too quickly. That's where the Nix Hydration Biosensor is designed to come in.

The product actually consists of three components: a single-use flexible patch that is temporarily adhered to the skin via kinesiology tape, the main biosensor device (called the Pod) which clicks onto the patch, and a free app on a Bluetooth-paired mobile device. Utilizing that app, users start by indicating what sort of activity they'll be performing, whether they'll be indoors or outdoors, and what sort of liquid they'll be drinking – if they're not just drinking water, they can choose from a menu of popular electrolyte drinks.





Once they've started the activity and have really begun sweating – usually after about 25 minutes – some of their sweat will start accumulating in a reservoir within the patch. A microprocessor in the Pod analyzes that sweat in real time, calculating the wearer's rate of fluid and electrolyte losses per hour.

The Nix patch (green) wicks in skin-surface sweat via microfluidic channels – the Pod (black) analyzes the sweat and transmits the data to a paired mobile device (Nix)

It transmits that data to the app, which in turn regularly notifies the user, letting them know when and how much to drink in order to forestall dehydration. The app also provides a post-workout summary, helping the user to optimize their hydration regime going forward, and to select an electrolyte drink that best meets their needs.

The Pod weighs less than half an ounce (14 g), and should be good for up to 36 hours of runtime per battery-charge. The app is currently compatible with the iPhone, Apple Watch and Garmin sports watches. Garmin cycling computer and Android compatibility is coming soon, with Strava, TrainingPeaks, Wahoo and Zwift integration also in the works.

Should you want one for yourself, the Nix Hydration Biosensor is available now via the product website. A kit containing one Pod, four sweat patches, one charging case and one USB cable **will cost you US\$129. A pack of four replacement patches is priced at \$25.**

EDITOR'S COMMENT: This patch would be most helpful to counter dehydration while inside a PPE (especially Level-A).

Gold nano-coating works like an anti-fog heating element for glasses

Source: <https://newatlas.com/materials/anti-fog-gold-coating-glasses/>

Along with its use on eyeglasses (lens at right), the coating could also be utilized on windows, mirrors or optical sensors (ETH Zurich)

Dec 12 – While anti-fog sprays work to a certain extent, warming a glass surface is a better way of keeping it fog-free. A new coating material is designed to do so, and it utilizes light-absorbing gold nanoparticles instead of electricity.

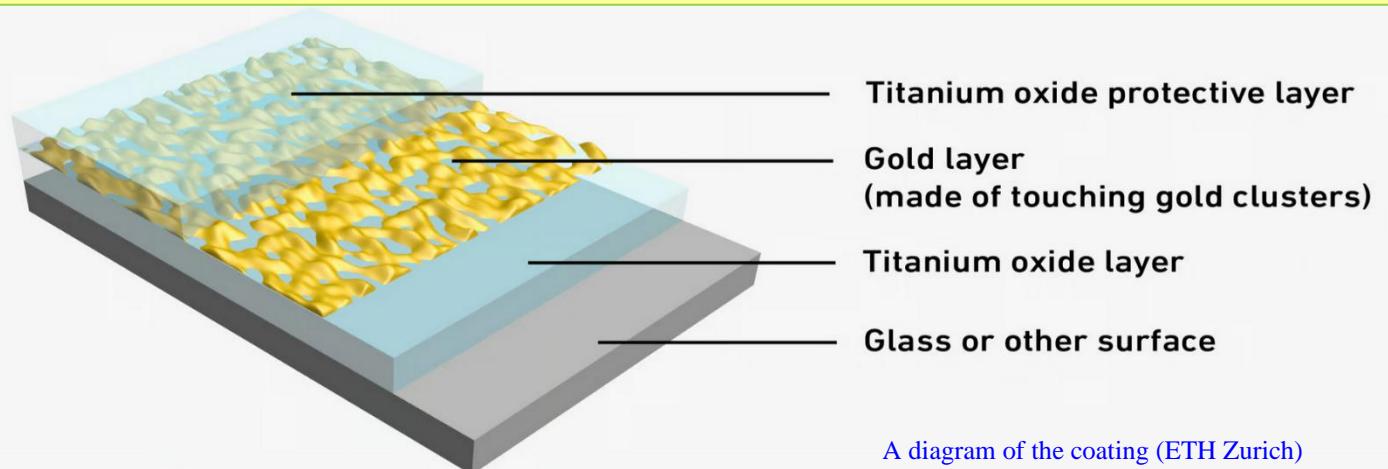
Most of the anti-fog sprays used on things like eyeglasses incorporate hydrophilic (water-attracting) molecules. These draw in and evenly dispense condensation, making it easier to see through. By contrast, your car's rear window uses integrated elements to heat the glass, keeping condensation from forming in the first place.

Developed by a team at the ETH Zurich research institute, the new coating likewise uses heat – but it doesn't require electricity. Instead, it uses a layer of clustered gold nanoparticles, sandwiched between two ultra-thin layers of titanium oxide – the whole coating is just 10 nanometers thick, which is about one-twelfth the thickness of a sheet of gold leaf.

The gold nanoparticles absorb much of the infrared spectrum of incoming sunlight, causing the coating to become up to 8 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the ambient temperature. That said, the nanoparticles absorb very little visible light, allowing the coating to stay transparent.



The refractive properties of the titanium oxide boost the efficiency of the heating effect. Additionally, the outer layer helps protect the gold from wear and tear. And as an added bonus, because the gold layer is electrically conductive, a power source such as a battery could be used to heat the coating when direct sunlight isn't an option. We first heard about the basis for this technology [back in 2019](#).



A diagram of the coating (ETH Zurich)

As compared to the coating which was described at that time, however, this one is much thinner and more flexible. It's also significantly more transparent, due not only to its thinness but also to the fact that it absorbs infrared light more selectively. Although very little gold is used in the coating – which helps to keep costs down – the scientists are now looking into other, less expensive metals.

► A paper on the research, which is being led by professors Dimos Poulikakos and Thomas Schutzius, was recently published in the journal [Nature Nanotechnology](#).

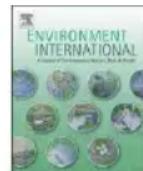
EDITOR'S COMMENT: An ideal solution for the glasses of our gas masks!



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Understanding public responses to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents – Driving factors, emerging themes and research gaps



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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the management of public responses to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials (CBRN). Given the extraordinary technical and operational challenges of a response to a CBRN release including, but not limited to, hazard detection and identification, casualty decontamination and multi-agency co-ordination, it is not surprising that public psychological and behavioural responses to such incidents have received limited attention by scholars and practitioners alike. As a result, a lack of understanding about the role of the public in effective emergency response constitutes a major gap in research and practice. This limitation must be addressed as a CBRN release has the potential to have wide-reaching psychological and behavioural impacts which, in turn, impact upon public morbidity and mortality rates. This paper addresses a number of key issues: why public responses matter; how responses have been conceptualised by practitioners; what factors have been identified as influencing public responses to a CBRN release and similar extreme events, and what further analysis is needed in order to generate a better understanding of public responses to inform the management of public responses to a CBRN release.

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UN Conference on Nuclear Proliferation, WMDs in the Middle East Meets in New York

Source: <https://www.irinsider.org/home/b25rnfbpbemzej0yv047zafrsl402>



Parties to the UN Conference on Nuclear Proliferation & WMDs in the Middle East, shown above. Israel is the only nation included in the committee's scope thought to possess nuclear weapons, but it did not participate in the 2022 Conference. Map: Julia Kempton for IR Insider

Dec 14 – From Nov. 14 to Nov. 18, representatives of 21 nations in the Middle East [met](#) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City to discuss nuclear non-proliferation and efforts to improve compliance with bans on biological and chemical weapons.

The 2022 Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction is the third such session to be held by the UN since 2019, as one conference was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, then-UNGA Session President Tijjani Muhammad Bande [declared](#) “nuclear disarmament...a top priority of the United Nations.” Muhammad Bande noted the Middle East could join Latin America, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia as regions free of nuclear weapons and government-held WMDs.

However, the issue - then and now - lacked political urgency.

Despite concern over the quest of certain rogue states (mainly North Korea) to acquire nuclear weapons, and diplomatic conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran over the latter's prospective nuclear weapons program, nuclear conflict was (and is) often dismissed as an impossibility. Saber-rattling from Vladimir Putin's regime since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine led President Biden to [declare](#) that “[Putin is] not joking when he talks about the use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons,” adding, “[w]e have not faced the prospect of Armageddon [like this] since Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis.”

The Conference series traces its roots to the UN's 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but it was the early 2000s – which saw weapons of mass destruction employed as a boogeyman to justify foreign intervention in the region – that prompted a more serious consideration of a regional non-proliferation treaty.

Israel is the only Middle Eastern country that is currently thought to possess nuclear weapons (although it has never publicly admitted their existence), but Iran has made significant efforts to build them in the past decade. In the past three decades, both Syria and Iraq have been known to employ biological and chemical weapons against their own citizens (Syria as recently as the last five years, and Iraq mainly in the 1990s).

While the conference's last three iterations have been spearheaded by Middle Eastern nations (Jordan, Qatar, and then Lebanon), this has not always been the case. A 2017 UN panel on creating a WMD Free Zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East was [hosted](#) by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN and the British American Security Information Council. That council ended with the release of a [draft treaty](#) for the

establishment of a WMDFZ in the Middle East, and the creation of roundtable discussions (in 2018), which eventually led to the 2019 Conference.

Twenty-one regional member states sent representatives, as did China, France, Russia, and the UK as observers. Israel, Comoros, and Somalia were absent. They met with representatives of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the Biological Weapons Convention's Implementation Support Unit. The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs also spoke during the three-day conference. The Conference consisted of three general debates, a summary by Kuwait of the 2022 working committee's progress, and four thematic debates, spread across a total of seven meetings.

The 'core obligations' of a potential treaty, as they stand, include "the total absence of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction from the region of the Middle East" (UN A/Conf.236/2022/3, 22) and that "[t]he zone treaty should include obligations for State parties not to carry out research on, develop, manufacture, produce, stockpile, test, possess, acquire, station, transfer, transit, or use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, other weapons of mass destruction or any fissionable source material nor to assist, encourage, induce or authorize, directly or indirectly, others to undertake any of these activities anywhere," (UN A/Conf.236/2022/3, 23).

Furthermore, "members of the Conference expressed *deep concern* about the two consecutive failures of the Review Conferences held in 2015 and 2022 as well as the failure of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, in 2018" (UN A/Conf.236/2022/3, 34), a list of criticisms whose length belies the inefficacy of most regional nonproliferation and WMDFZ efforts over the past decade.

Iran's state-run media and government have repeatedly blamed Israel as the reason for the WMD-free zone's failure. Israel, for its part, has refused to participate in the proceedings, saying they fail to take into account its national security and a culture of non-compliance with existing treaties in the region.

An earlier iteration of the Middle East WMD/NNP conference series fell apart in 2012 amid tensions between Israel and occupied Palestinian territories, and the fallout from the Arab Spring. The UN again challenged Israeli possession of nuclear weapons under the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty earlier this month, which Israel has never signed.

Syria has arguably hindered the Conference's progress through repeated criticisms of the OPCW structure and its "hostility", presumably meant to distract from OPCW's accusations that Bashar Al-Assad's regime committed mass atrocities in the Civil War. According to one supplementary document submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic this year, the OPCW collaborated with "terrorists" such as the internationally recognized humanitarian group White Helmets.

Kuwait, which headed the 2021 conference, has nominally voiced full support for the non-proliferation and WMD-free zone program. This could be in part due to Kuwait's historic experiences and wariness regarding WMDs following the 1990 invasion by Iraq.

Qatar has similarly taken a firm stance in favor of a WMD-free zone and, in 2022, signed the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). However, with an enforceable regional treaty years in the future, it is also true that it is much easier for a country like Kuwait or Qatar, which have no nuclear weapons, to agree to their absence in theory than to swear to it in geopolitical practice. Lebanon's Jeanne Mrad, the conference's chairperson, admitted at the end of the session that "We are fully aware that the journey to reach our objective is a very challenging one, but I am convinced that with a strong political will and commitment, we can achieve progress with collective dedication, wisdom and hard work." Another session is scheduled for November 2023, again in New York. Until then, a working committee is tasked with drafting "(a) glossary of terminologies; and (b) general principles and obligations for a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction."

The Army is testing out slightly less miserable CBRN gear

Source: <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/army-2pug-cbrn-gear/>

Dec 15 – Wearing the equipment that is supposed to protect you from chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear contamination sucks. It just does. Whether you know it as Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology (JSLIST) or just as Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear, it's hot, it's bulky, and it's a hassle to carry around when there is little chance that it's going to be used. It's also very likely that it won't match the camouflage pattern of the rest of your uniform. Perhaps a new version of the garments will make all that a little less miserable.

Earlier this month, soldiers from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood, Texas, took part in some testing of the two-piece undergarment — or 2PUG — that is projected to replace the JSLIST within a few years.

The new gear is designed to be lighter than its predecessor and provide improved fitting and comfort, and better temperature regulation when worn.



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Soldiers recently tested out newly designed chemical, biological, radiation, and nuclear protection equipment Dec. 8, 2022, at Fort Hood, Texas. (Staff Sgt. Christopher Stewart/U.S. Army).

"We're doing simple simulations by having the [trooper] wear the garments and move around in them while we take measurements," Dr. Todd Garlie, a research anthropologist from U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command [said in an Army press release](#). "It's critical that we get Soldiers' feedback on how the garments fit. If you don't have good fitting equipment, you can't perform your mission."

In other words, the training was focused on seeing just how effectively soldiers can move around while wearing the 2PUG, which is important.

A U.S. Army Trooper assigned to the 3rd Cavalry Regiment assumes a kneeling position with a dummy rifle while testing newly designed chemical, biological, radiation, and nuclear protection equipment on Dec. 8, 2022, at Fort Hood, Texas. (Staff Sgt. Christopher Stewart/U.S. Army)

As retired Army Col. G.P. Kreuger [wrote](#) in the 2012 paper, Advances in Military Textiles and Personal Equipment, "Wearing CPC (chemical protective clothing) adversely affects the performance of tasks involving oral and visual communication, sensory (vision, hearing, kinesthetic, olfactory) and psychomotor activity, rifle marksmanship, aviator flying skills, and others." Rather than being an entirely separate set of gear, the 2PUG is designed to integrate into a soldier's uniform.

"It feels like you're wearing a thicker set of pajamas,"

said Staff Sgt. Zachary Keel, a cavalry scout leader assigned to 4th Squadron, 3d Cavalry Regiment. "I think it's a big improvement to the JSLIST." The Air Force has also been testing a similar set of CBRN



equipment. In January 2022, airmen from the 317th Airlift Wing at Dyess Air Force Base in Texas conducted flight operations, testing the functionality and comfortability of the 2PUG.

Should the Army, or its sibling services, move forward with the 2PUG, it would replace the JSLIST, commonly referred to as MOPP gear, currently in use by most troops, which was first fielded in 1997.

No one, other than maybe a few contrarians out there, likes wearing MOPP gear. But if it can become even a little bit more comfortable, maybe even fit a little better and weigh a little less when it is being lugged around, well, that is a net positive. Giving it the appropriate camouflage pattern can probably wait until the next Army uniform change.

Management of chemical injuries of the eye

By Quresh Maskati

1987, *Indian Journal of Ophthalmology*

Source: https://www.academia.edu/33251037/Management_of_chemical_injuries_of_the_eye?email_work_card=view-paper

The extreme morbidity that a severe chemical burn produces makes it imperative that immediate treatment be instituted for the purpose of restoration of the integrity and transparency of the cornea. The evolution of cicatrisation in severe chemical injuries especially alkali, takes an unfavourable course. Release of collagenase from the newly formed epithelium and fibroblasts of the stroma and lack of required levels of ascorbate in the aqueous humour causes fibroblasts to develop a denatured weak collagen.

Protecting Populations: Public Health Preparedness and Response to Terrorism Events

By Frank Rando and Dee Ruelas

NCT Magazine / 12/17 (December 2022)

Source: <https://nct-magazine.com/nct-magazine-november-december-2022/protecting-populations-public-health-preparedness-and-response-to-terrorism-events>

Traditionally, the field of public health has been grounded in the prevention of disease and the promotion of health and wellness in communities. In former years, rarely, if ever, public health was a prominent or critical stakeholder in terrorism preparedness and response, let alone taken the shape of a bona fide first response entity. Fairly recently, the role and importance of public health in disaster management has been firmly established at local, state, national and global levels. Indeed, the value of public health in disaster management has been demonstrated time and again as both natural and man-made adverse events have generated effects impacting healthcare delivery systems, critical infrastructure, supply and distribution chains, environmental health, and the psychosocial aspects of the affected population(s).

Public health emergency management or public health emergency preparedness have become frontline priority areas since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the October 2001 anthrax attacks via the U.S postal system. Subsequently, public health agencies at all levels of government have been included in emergency planning and preparedness efforts and are of paramount importance in incident management.

In the U.S., public health roles and responsibilities in both natural and man – made events fall under Emergency Support Function # 8 (Health & Medical) of the National Response Framework (NRF) which is a component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

In the terrorism context, public health capacity and capabilities become critical to the overall homeland and national security missions as well as the health and medical component of the National Response Framework and its designated roles and responsibilities. For example, the Laboratory Response Network (LRN), was created in 1999 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to expand and link up laboratories that can respond to biological and chemical threats and other public health emergencies such as pandemic threats and natural disasters.

The public health sector strives to address all the complex and multifactorial health, safety and environmental concerns of communities that are subjected to any CBRNE terrorism attack.

In 2002, the U.S Congress passed the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Act “to improve the ability of United States to prevent, prepare for, and respond to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies”.

The first hints of public health becoming an important front-line function in emergency preparedness and incident response were evident in several acts of terrorism, technological disasters, and catastrophic natural events over the years.



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●► Read the full article at the source's URL.

Mr. Frank Rando currently serves as an allied health programs educator / lead instructor and healthcare emergency preparedness/medical readiness /public health preparedness and tactical, operational - disaster medicine and homeland security Subject Matter Expert, educator , instructor and curriculum designer. He has served in instructional, guest speaker and consultative roles for DHS-FEMA, various components of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium, DoD, industry, academia, health, safety and regulatory entities, emergency services organizations and healthcare. He recently served during the COVID-19 public health emergency as a clinician and clinical researcher and also served in medical and health care support as a clinician for US Customs and Border Protection. Frank is also an experienced clinician, first responder and an occupational – environmental health scientist with real world experience in hazardous materials management, hazards and pollution control, biosafety, industrial, environmental and inhalation toxicology, environmental epidemiology, exposure and risk assessment and emergency response.

Ms. Dee Ruelas possesses over 35 years of dedicated professional experience in various roles in public safety/ emergency services, teaching and instruction, healthcare, environmental health and safety, emergency preparedness, community resiliency and Christian ministry. Dee was also a decorated public safety-emergency medical communications specialist for the City of Tucson Fire Department and worked for the Tucson Municipal Court, where one of her roles was serving as the Fire Prevention and General Safety Officer for the municipal courts system. Currently, Dee has been serving as a clinical specialist in COVID-19 testing and vaccination services and served as a medical and healthcare support specialist for US Customs and Border Protection.

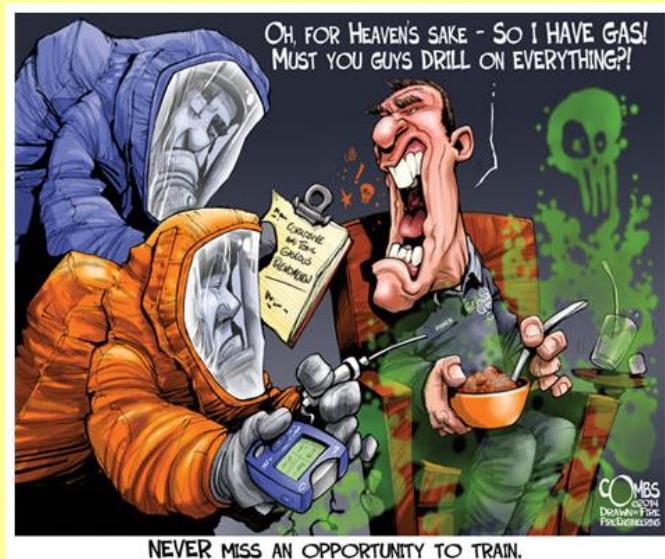
CBRN

DEFENCE & SECURITY
SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL

In the shadow of the bomb 2022



With the Russian invasion force in a stalemate and increasingly charged rhetoric around the possession of dirty bombs and biological weapons, the CBRN threat hanging over Ukraine grows by the day. Nicholas Kenny speaks with **Hamish de Bretton-Gordon**, former UK and Nato commander of CBRN forces, and **Antonella Cavallo**, rescEU CBRN technical lead at the European Commission, to learn about why concerns are growing and what is being done to help protect the Ukrainian people from such an attack.



2023 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES

15TH ANNIVERSARY NUCLEAR DETERRENCE February 13-15, 2023 | Hyatt Regency Crystal City | Arlington, VA SUMMIT

www.exchangemonitor.com/go/nuclear-deterrance-summit-2023/



<https://nct-events.com/event>

04-08 September: NCT USA
Aberdeen Proving Ground, Edgewood MD

04-11 November: NCT Asia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

21-24 March 2023 | National Harbor, Washington DC

JOINT CIVIL & DOD CBRN
Symposium and Technology Showcase

Delivering Timely and Effective Defense Capabilities across the CBRN Enterprise

dsigroup.org

The 10th Annual Joint Civil & DoD CBRN Symposium will provide a forum for members of the DoD, Federal Government, State and Local Government, Private Industry, Academia, and other relevant CBRN stakeholders to discuss the latest updates in advancing a government wide approach to improving CBRN defense, readiness and response strategies and capabilities.



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21-26 May: International CBRN Commandants and Commanders Conference (ICCC) 2023
Rotterdam, The Netherland

25-27 July, NDIA Annual CBRN Symposium and Exhibition
Baltimore Civic Center, Baltimore, MD
www.ndia.org/events



The Fragile Balance of Terror: Deterrence in the Nuclear Age

Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC)
2 February, Stanford, United States
Website: <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/events/rose-mcdermott-andamy-zegart-february-2023>

Cyber Challenge 2023

Swedish Defence University and National Cyber Security Centre
9 February, Stockholm, Sweden
Website: <https://www.fhs.se/en/swedish-defence-university/events/2022-09-29-cyber-challenge-2023---live-on-campus.html>

Program on Cyber Security Studies (PCSS 23-03)

George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies
14-31 March, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany
Website: <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/event/program-cyber-security-studies-pcss-23-03>

Cyber Symposium

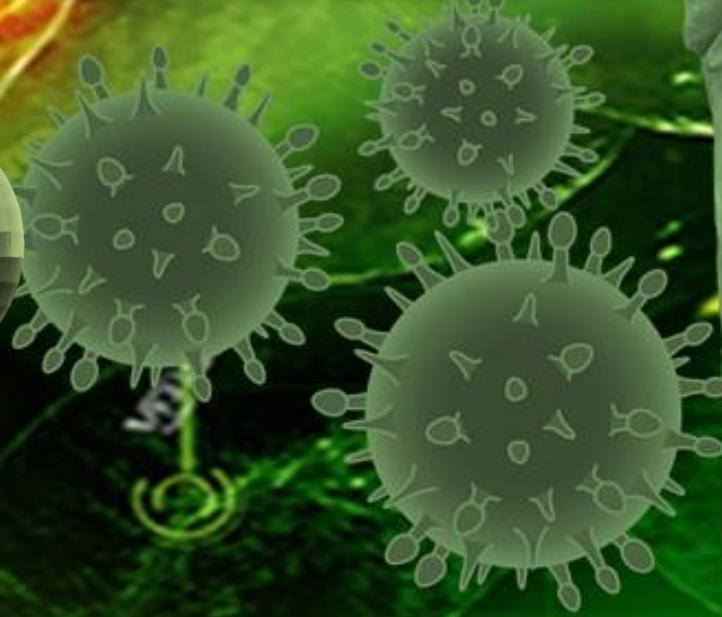
Cranfield University
21-22 March, Cranfield, United Kingdom
Website: <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/events/symposia/cyber#Overview>



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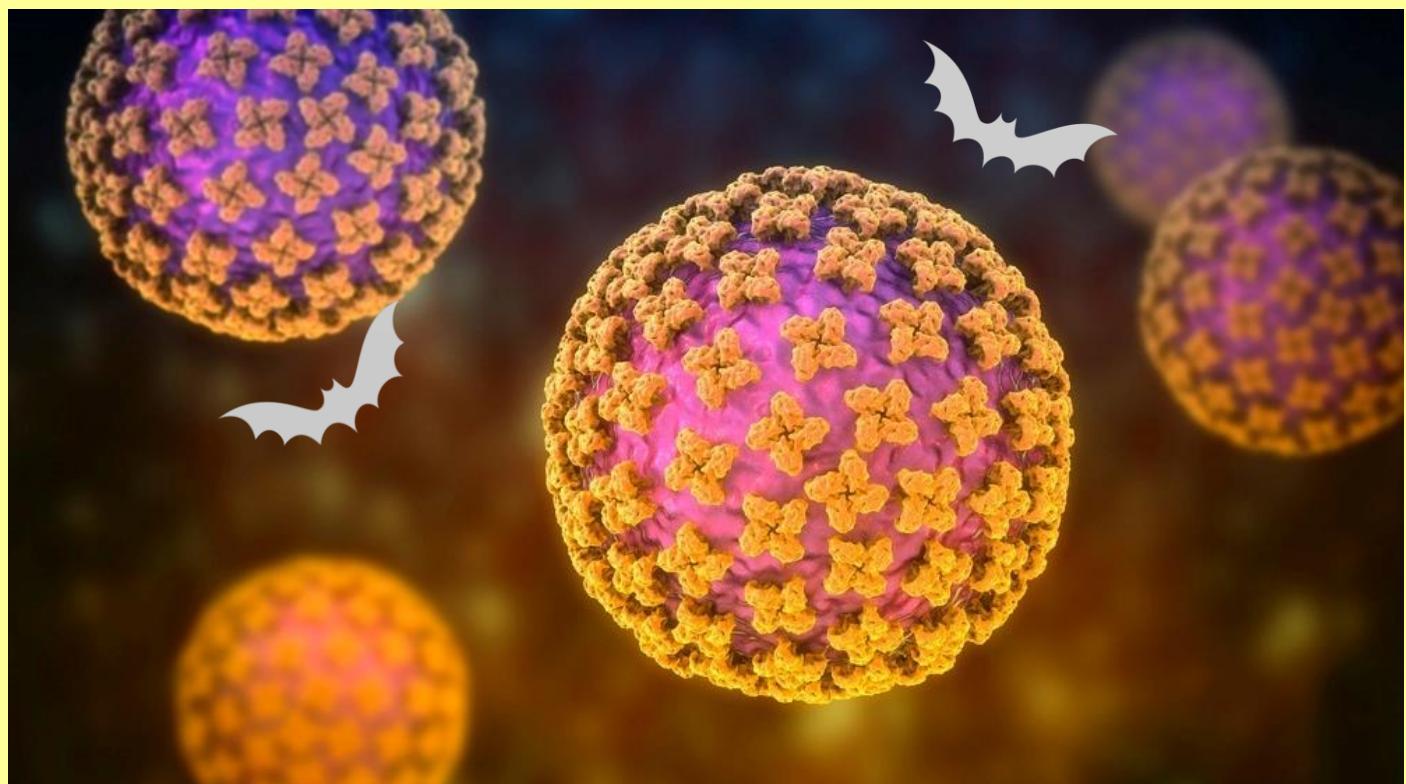




Kiwira virus: a new bat-borne hantavirus detected in Africa

Source: <https://www.news-medical.net/news/20221121/Kiwira-virus-a-new-bat-borne-hantavirus-detected-in-Africa.aspx>

Nov 21 - A recent [Viruses](#) journal study discusses the Kiwira virus, which belongs to the *Hantaviridae* family, including its discovery, phylogenetic placement, and tissue distribution of viral ribonucleic acid (RNA).



Study: [Kiwira Virus, a Newfound Hantavirus Discovered in Free-tailed Bats \(Molossidae\) in East and Central Africa. Image Credit: Kateryna Kon / Shutterstock.com](#)

What are hantaviruses?

Hantaviruses belonging to the *Hantaviridae* family have tri-segmented RNA genomes. The small (S) genomic segment encodes for the nucleocapsid (N) protein, whereas the medium (M) segment encodes for envelope [glycoproteins](#), and the large (L) genomic segment encodes for RNA-dependent RNA polymerase.

Several small mammals can harbor hantaviruses, the most notable of which include rodents, followed by shrews, bats, and moles. Several hantaviruses are capable of infecting humans, all of which have originated from rodents and belong to the *Orthohantavirus* genus. Upon infection in humans, hantaviruses cause fever, followed by renal and respiratory impairments that can ultimately lead to organ failure.

Bat-borne hantaviruses, belonging to either the *Mobatvirus* or *Loanvirus* genera, have been reported in 14 bat species throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa. However, these viruses have yet to be isolated and cultured; therefore, their potential to infect humans is not fully understood.

About the study

In the current study, bats were captured in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South-West Tanzania in 2017 and subsequently anesthetized and sacrificed. All bats' intestines, kidneys, lungs, spleen, and liver were collected.

Tissue specimens were collected for viral RNA extraction and analysis by the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assay. In addition, phylogenetic analyses were also performed.





Study findings

PCR analysis revealed the presence of hantavirus sequences in six out of 334 bats from Tanzania and one out of the 49 bats obtained from DRC.

Notably, the viruses isolated from both Tanzania and DRC bats shared 98.6% identity. The highest pairwise identities were observed between the Quezon and Robinia viruses of up to 82.9% and 81.4%, respectively.

All Hantavirus-positive bats obtained from Tanzania were Angolan free-tailed bats, otherwise known as *Mops condylurus*, which belong to the Molossidae family. This species was not previously known to harbor hantaviruses.

Out of the six Hantavirus-positive bats from Tanzania, one was female, and five were male. The one positive bat from DRC was male; however, the species of this bat could not be determined.

Hantavirus-negative bats belonged to Molossidae (89), Pteropodidae (226), Hipposideridae(1), Rhinolophidae (3), and Vespertilionidae (39) families, whereas the remaining 18 bat species could not be identified.

All tissues collected from the Hantavirus-positive bats from Tanzania were positive for viral RNA, except for one bat in which the lungs were the only organ positive for this virus. Notably, two bats exhibited the highest viral loads in their spleens.

A novel virus sequence was observed from the Tanzania bats that were subsequently denoted as the "Kiwira" virus within the *Mobatavirus* genus. This discovery makes the Kiwira virus the fourth bat-borne hantavirus to be identified in Africa.

The complete nucleocapsid and glycoprotein precursor amino acid sequences of the novel Kiwira virus could not be obtained for further analysis. The closest relatives to the Kiwira virus include the Robinia and Quezon viruses.

Bats infected with the Kiwira virus exhibited systemic infection, including involvement in their kidneys and intestines. Thus, it is likely that the hantavirus can be excreted through both urine and feces.

Conclusions

M. condylurus bats circulate throughout Africa, often found in buildings and hollow trees and throughout various parts of both tropical and savannah regions ranging from West to East African countries. In addition to the widespread distribution of these bats throughout Africa, the proximity of the bats captured in this study to human settlements raises concerns that the Kiwira virus could potentially spill over to humans.

Although hantaviruses do not appear to cause disease in humans, their ability to cause febrile illness, a common symptom shared with other infections, may allow its infection to be overlooked. It is, therefore, essential to improve the development of accurate serological assays that can be used to confirm infection with hantaviruses.

► **Journal reference:** Weiss, S., Sudi, L. E., Düx, A., et al. (2022). Kiwira Virus, a Newfound Hantavirus Discovered in Free-tailed Bats (Molossidae) in East and Central Africa. *Viruses*. doi:10.3390/v14112368

Vaccinated Americans a majority of COVID deaths for first time in August: analysis

Kaiser Family Foundation says, 'We can no longer say this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated'

Source: <https://www.foxnews.com/health/vaccinated-americans-a-majority-of-covid-deaths-for-first-time-in-august-analysis>

Nov 23 – For the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, a majority of Americans dying from the coronavirus were at least partially vaccinated, according to a new analysis of federal and state data.

The waning efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and increasingly contagious strains of the virus being spread to elderly and immunocompromised people have resulted in more deaths among those who have taken at least one vaccine dose, a Washington Post analysis [published Wednesday](#) finds.

"Fifty-eight percent of coronavirus deaths in August were people who were vaccinated or boosted," the Post reported.

The paper described a "troubling trend" as the share of deaths of people who were vaccinated has been "steadily rising" over the past year.

"In September 2021, vaccinated people made up just 23 percent of coronavirus fatalities. In January and February this year, it was up to 42 percent," the Washington Post's Fenit Nirappil and Dan Keating wrote.





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"We can no longer say this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated," said Kaiser Family Foundation vice president Cynthia Cox, who conducted the analysis on behalf of the Post.

 Disclose.tv
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NEW - Vaccinated people now make up a "majority of covid deaths." It is "no longer" a "pandemic of the unvaccinated."



washingtonpost.com
Analysis | Vaccinated people now make up a majority of covid deaths
The trend underscores the importance of regular booster...
 7:26 μ.μ. · 23 Nov 2022 

Top health officials have repeatedly urged Americans to complete their primary vaccine series and get boosted to maximize vaccine protection against COVID-19.

At a press briefing Tuesday, White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha unveiled the Biden administration's new "six-week sprint" campaign to get Americans vaccinated this holiday season.

"Bottom line is that we're doing everything we can in the next six weeks to help families get their updated COVID shots by the end of the year, because it's the best protection for this winter," Jha said, adding that the latest iteration of the COVID-19 vaccine is a "once a year shot," similar to the flu shot.

Outgoing [White House Chief Medical Adviser Dr. Anthony Fauci](#) also spoke at Tuesday's press briefing, where he delivered his "final message" before stepping down at the end of the year.

Fauci emphasized the safety and efficacy of the approved COVID-19 vaccines in preventing severe illness and deaths and encouraged Americans to get vaccinated and boosted as soon as possible. He noted that coronavirus vaccine effectiveness wanes over time and said the disease shouldn't be compared to other vaccine-treatable illnesses

like measles because of new emerging variants every few months.

"My message, and my final message, maybe the final message I give you from this podium, is that please, for your own safety, for that of your family, get your updated COVID 19 shot as soon as you're eligible to protect yourself, your family and your community," Fauci said. "I urge you to visit vaccine.gov to find a location where you can easily get an updated vaccine, and please do it as soon as possible."

Multiple medical experts, including Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx, [have acknowledged](#) that the coronavirus vaccines do not necessarily protect people against infection and transmission.

A Growing Threat: Deliberate, Simultaneous Release of Pandemic Viruses Across Travel Hubs

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221123-a-growing-threat-deliberate-simultaneous-release-of-pandemic-viruses-across-travel-hubs>

Nov 23 – Pandemic-class agents are as deadly as nuclear weapons – but are far more accessible than nuclear materials.

The international community has gone to considerable lengths to prevent non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapons. COVID-19 has demonstrated, however, that even relatively mild pandemic viruses can kill more people than any nuclear device. Pandemic-class agents would be strategically useless to nation-states due to their slow spread and indiscriminate lethality, but they might be acquired and deliberately released by terrorists.

COVID-19 demonstrated how the world is clearly vulnerable to the introduction of a single pandemic virus with a comparatively low case fatality rate. The deliberate and simultaneous release of many pandemic viruses across travel hubs could threaten the stability of civilization. Current trends suggest that within a decade, tens of thousands of skilled individuals will be able to access the information required for them single-handedly to cause new pandemics.

[Kevin M. Esvelt](#), Polymath Fellow within the Global Fellowship Initiative of the [Geneva Center for Security Policy](#) (GCSP), Associate Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab, and a co-founder of SecureBio Inc. and the SecureDNA Foundation, writes in a new GCSP paper – [Delay, Detect, Defend: Preparing for a Future in which Thousands Can Release New Pandemics](#) – that safeguarding civilization from the catastrophic misuse of biotechnology requires delaying the development and misuse of pandemic-class agents while building systems capable of reliably detecting threats and preventing nearly all infections. Here are three sections from Esvelt's paper:

Executive Summary

The world is demonstrably vulnerable to the introduction of a single pandemic virus with a comparatively low case fatality rate. The deliberate and simultaneous release of many pandemic



viruses across travel hubs could threaten the stability of civilisation. Current trends suggest that within a decade, tens of thousands of skilled individuals will be able to access the information required for them to single-handedly cause new pandemics. Safeguarding civilisation from the catastrophic misuse of biotechnology requires delaying the development and misuse of pandemic-class agents while building systems capable of reliably detecting threats and preventing nearly all infections.

Key Takeaways

Background

- ✓ We don't yet know of any credible viruses that could cause new pandemics, but ongoing research projects aim to publicly identify them.
- ✓ Identifying a sequenced virus as pandemic-capable will allow >1,000 individuals to assemble it.
- ✓ One person with a list of such viruses could simultaneously ignite multiple pandemics.
- ✓ Viruses can spread faster than vaccines or antivirals can be distributed.
- ✓ Pandemic agents are more lethal than nuclear devices and will be accessible to terrorists.

Delay

- ✓ A pandemic test-ban treaty will delay proliferation without slowing beneficial advances.
- ✓ Liability and insurance for catastrophic outcomes will compensate for negative externalities.
- ✓ Secure and universal DNA synthesis screening can reduce unauthorised access by >100-fold.

Detect

- ✓ Untargeted sequencing can reliably detect all exponentially spreading biological threats

Defend

Goal: eliminate the virus while providing food, water, power, law enforcement, and healthcare

- ✓ Develop and distribute pandemic-proof protective equipment for all essential workers
- ✓ Comfortable, stylish, durable powered respirators must be proven to work reliably
- ✓ Foster resilient supply chains, local production, and behavioural outbreak control
- ✓ Strengthen systems and offer individualised early warning to block transmission
- ✓ Develop and install germicidal low-wavelength lights, which appear to be harmless to humans
- ✓ Overhead fixtures can reduce airborne and surface pathogens by >90 per cent in seconds

Introduction

Relative to nuclear weapons, pandemic-class agents are comparably lethal and will be far more accessible

The international community has gone to immense lengths to prevent non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, COVID-19 has demonstrated that even relatively mild pandemic viruses can kill more people than any nuclear device. While pandemic-class agents would be strategically useless to nation-states due to their slow spread and indiscriminate lethality, they might be acquired and deliberately released by terrorists.

Numerous independent advances in virology and biotechnology, none of which is obviously threatening on its own, have recently combined to render many viruses accessible to skilled individuals at a low cost. Step-by-step assembly protocols capable of producing infectious viruses from a genome sequence and standard laboratory reagents are widely available,(1) with particularly detailed and reliable instructions for influenza viruses and coronaviruses, the families responsible for the last five respiratory pandemics.(2) Such protocols, which are intended to obviate the requirement for "tacit knowledge" to successfully perform the experiment, have become increasingly common. The recent democratisation of biotechnology suggests that they have broadly succeeded: the typical advance made in a cutting-edge laboratory by individuals with doctorates has required just one year to be reproduced in other laboratories, three years to be adapted for use in other contexts, five years to be reproduced by undergraduates and individuals with moderate skills, and 12-13 years to become accessible to high school students and others with low skills and resources.(3)

Today, perhaps 30,000 individuals with doctorates currently possess the skills(4) to follow the most straightforward virus assembly protocols: the United States has awarded approximately 2500 doctorates in virology in the past 20 years,(5) at least three times as many scientists in more common disciplines such as synthetic biology, bioengineering, and biomedicine also work with viruses and can follow such protocols, and the United States trains approximately one-third of such scientists worldwide.(6) No clinical samples are required: due to exponentially falling sequencing costs, most virus genome sequences are shared publicly soon after discovery, allowing them to be assembled from commercially available synthetic DNA, which is now widely available at a low and exponentially falling cost (see graph).(7) While members of the International Gene Synthesis Consortium, an industry group concerned about the prospect of misuse,





screen customers and DNA synthesis orders for hazards at considerable expense, it is easy to find nonmembers that presumably do not.(8)

While sequenced viruses are widely accessible, pandemic proliferation and misuse cannot yet occur because we lack key knowledge: there are still no credible examples of viruses likely to cause new pandemics. As soon as someone identifies a single capable virus and shares its complete genome sequence, many thousands of people will immediately be able to generate infectious samples that could start a new pandemic. A list of many such viruses would allow a suitably skilled and resourced individual to ignite more pandemics simultaneously than would naturally occur in a century.

This future appears bleak and frightening. There is a natural temptation to reject it, and search for reasons to believe that the life sciences, which have given us cures for so many diseases, could not possibly pose a threat comparable to nuclear weapons. As a biologist and biotechnologist, I find the temptation to disbelieve nearly overwhelming. If human actions could never yield globally catastrophic consequences, then faster, more open science would always be the right decision. Yet the highest tenet of science is our reverence for the truth. Nuclear weapons and climate change have already proven that we do not live in such an idyllic world, and it would be irresponsible of us to pretend otherwise.

The primary reason that no terrorist has ever gained access to a nuclear device – or even the fissile materials required to create one – is that people of many nations recognized the proliferation threat and worked together to forestall it.(9) The resulting nuclear security measures did not prevent us from reaping the benefits of nuclear power: the International Atomic Energy Agency estimates that between 1971 and 2018, nuclear power plants prevented the emission of 74 gigatons of carbon dioxide, and continue to prevent an additional two gigatons per year.(10) Today, it's unlikely that a naive observer would single out nuclear physics as an unusually unhealthy or unproductive field even though it has operated under security restrictions for many decades, and although working in climate science may be less comfortable now that the field has been politicised, accurate projections are arguably more important than ever.

Biology is no different. We can rationally assess the potential for misuse and take appropriate countermeasures without impeding beneficial advances; in fact, we have already done so. The advent of recombinant DNA in the 1970's – i.e. the ability to cut and splice genes – provoked widespread concern that "there was an atomic bomb hidden away in modern biology."(11) "Scientists were concerned that unfettered pursuit of this research might engender unforeseen and damaging consequences for human health and Earth's ecosystems,"(12) leading them to declare a moratorium on their own research. Only after intense discussions at the famous Asilomar conference of 1975 did they correctly conclude that recombinant DNA within carefully chosen laboratory-adapted constructs posed no risk of spreading on its own.(13) As nuclear fears receded with the end of the Cold War and the conclusions of Asilomar were confirmed, fears of "Andromeda strains" faded,(14) while assertions that "Nature is the greatest bioterrorist" – that humanity cannot match nature's ability to generate novel agents capable of spreading on their own in the wild – became a cliché.(15) This claim may have been accurate as recently as a decade ago, but is now tenuous at best. For example, in 2013 I discovered CRISPR-based gene drive, a technology widely viewed to be capable of spreading genomic alterations made in laboratory organisms to entire wild species.(16) Gene drive systems, which can cause populations to collapse if not go extinct,(17) hold tremendous promise for eradicating diseases such as malaria and schistosomiasis, but the technology is accessible to individual researchers, who in principle are now capable of single-handedly altering Earth's ecosystems. The remarkable acceleration of new advances in biotechnology over the past decade strongly suggests that other methods of building agents capable of exponential spread are also possible. Add ongoing attempts to deliberately engineer lethal viruses to become highly transmissible, (18) and asserting that humanity will not develop novel methods of engineering new pandemic-class agents appears to be dangerously overconfident.(19)

Nor does catastrophic misuse require novelty. Animal viruses manifestly do not spill over to cause pandemics in multiple airports simultaneously, and certainly not in groups, but once enough of them are identified, thousands of people will be capable of causing both.(20) If current trends continue, many such viruses will be made public: well-intentioned researchers at one agency currently seek to identify animal viruses capable of causing new pandemics, share their genome sequences with the world, and publish them in a list rank-ordered by threat level.(21) The security implications, which apparently went unrecognised by the relevant agency, its scientists, and even national security experts for over a dozen years, are ghastly.

A credible list of pandemic-capable viruses would in principle allow anyone capable of assembling those agents to seed so many outbreaks that even the harshest and most comprehensive of lockdowns by today's nations would struggle to contain them all. With some natural viruses exhibiting the transmissibility of early variants of SARS-CoV-2 and a lethality rate exceeding 30 per cent,(22) such an event could precipitate the greatest catastrophe in the history of humanity. Even the best-prepared nations lack sufficient protective equipment for most key personnel, and vaccines and other medical countermeasures could not plausibly be manufactured and distributed in any time frame shorter than months, if they could be developed at all. (23) If essential workers are unwilling or unable to maintain food, water, and power distribution networks, societies will collapse. This outcome is not inevitable, however, or even especially





likely. But the same is true of a large-scale nuclear exchange, and of four degrees of climate warming: we cannot tolerate a tiny chance of any of them actually occurring. On this basis alone, we should approach the mitigation of global catastrophic biological risk with the same degree of seriousness as we do nuclear nonproliferation and climate change mitigation.

Below, I propose a set of interventions that, taken together, could plausibly solve this immense problem while negligibly impacting the lifesaving work of my colleagues in the life sciences. Technologies capable of effectively immunising nations against even adversarial releases of pandemic-class agents are now within our reach, and the price tag is a tiny fraction of existing defence budgets, let alone the cost of mitigating climate change. By delaying proliferation while we construct reliable systems for threat detection and defence, we can safeguard the international community from biological catastrophe.

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COVID-19 Affects Brain 6 Months After Symptoms, Research Finds

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/984517>

Nov 22 – Scientists have found that COVID-19 causes brain "abnormalities" even six months after symptoms are gone, according to an upcoming report to the [Radiological Society of North America](#).



They found changes to the brain stem and front lobe in areas of the brain associated with fatigue, [insomnia](#), anxiety, [depression](#), headaches, and cognitive issues. About 20% of adults will have long-term effects from COVID-19, according to the CDC. Neurological symptoms associated with long COVID include poor concentration, headaches, and sleep problems. Long COVID can also cause changes to the heart, lungs, and other organs, the RSNA says.

In this study, researchers used a special MRI to detect and monitor neurological conditions such as microbleeds, vascular malformations, brain tumors, and [stroke](#).

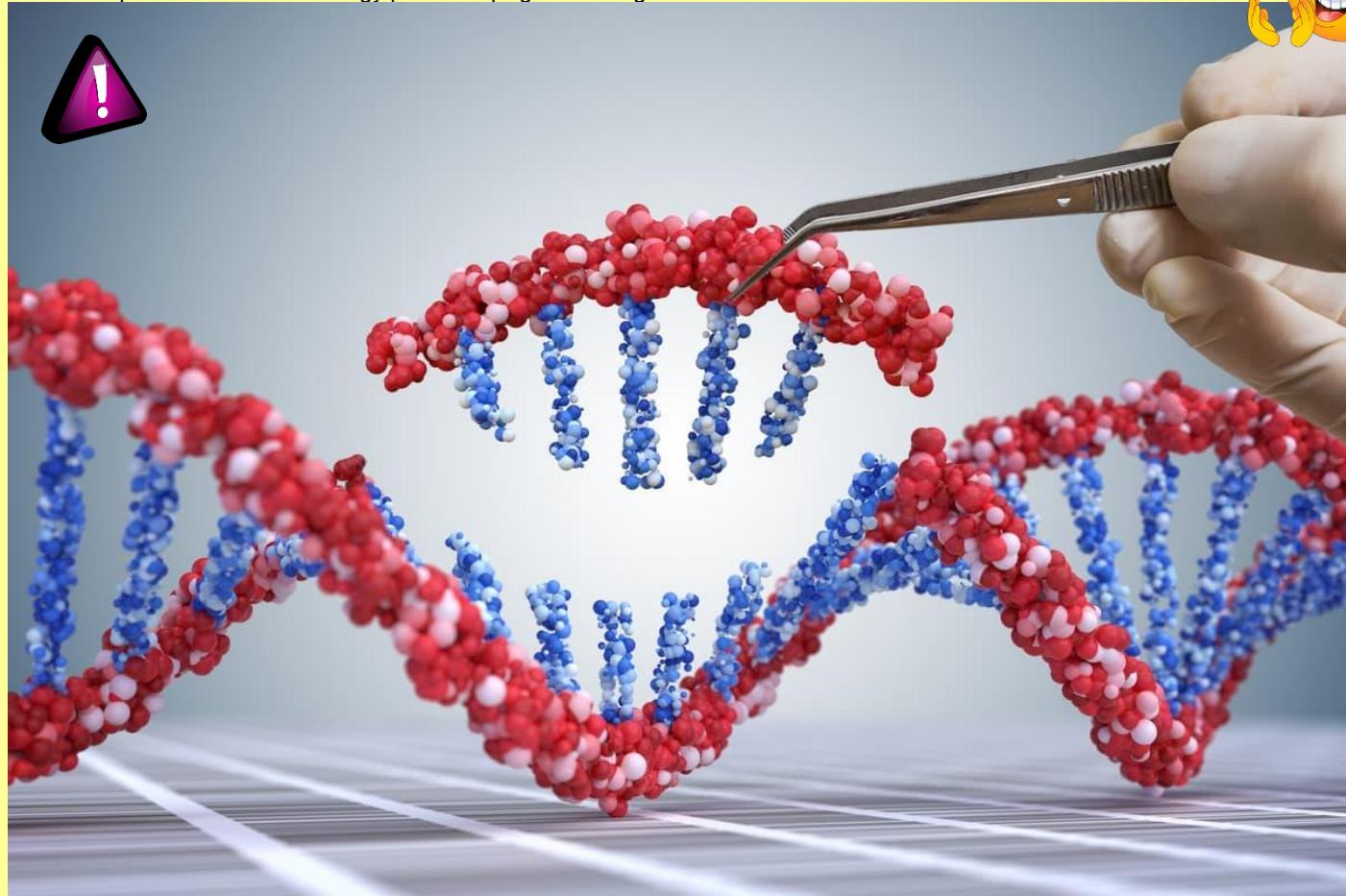
"Group-level studies have not previously focused on COVID-19 changes in magnetic susceptibility of the brain despite several case reports signaling such abnormalities," said study co-author Sapna S. Mishra, a Ph.D. candidate at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi, in [SciTechDaily](#). "Our study highlights this new aspect of the neurological effects of COVID-19 and reports significant abnormalities in COVID survivors."

Scientists compared imaging of 46 patients who had recovered from COVID and 30 who had been healthy. The images were taken within six months of recovery. "Changes in susceptibility values of brain regions may be indicative of local compositional changes," Mishra said. "Susceptibilities may reflect the presence of abnormal quantities of paramagnetic compounds, whereas lower susceptibility could be caused by abnormalities like calcification or lack of paramagnetic molecules containing iron."

The researchers will conduct similar studies on the same group of participants to see if the COVID-19 affects continue over time.

New CRISPR gene-editing system can "drag-and-drop" DNA in bulk

Source: <https://newatlas.com/biology/paste-crispr-gene-editing-tool/>



Nov 25 – A new technique has been added to the [CRISPR gene-editing toolbox](#). Known as PASTE, the system uses virus enzymes to "drag-and-drop" large sections of DNA into a genome, which could help treat a range of genetic diseases.

The CRISPR system originated in bacteria, which used it as a defense mechanism against viruses that prey on them. Essentially, if a bacterium survived a viral infection, it would use CRISPR enzymes to snip out a small segment of the virus DNA, and use that to remind itself how to fight off future infections of that



virus. Over the past few decades, scientists [adapted this system](#) into a powerful tool for genetic engineering. The CRISPR system consists of an enzyme, usually one called Cas9, which cuts DNA, and a short RNA sequence that guides the system to make this cut in the right section of the genome. This can be used to snip out problematic genes, such as those that [cause disease](#), and can substitute them with other, more beneficial genes. The problem is that this process involves breaking both strands of DNA, which can be difficult for the cell to patch back up as intended, leading to [unintended alterations](#) and [higher risks of cancer](#) in edited cells. So MIT researchers set out to develop a new version of the tool that was more gentle on the genome. Rather than the “cut-and-paste” method of existing CRISPR-Cas9, the team describes the new method as more of a “drag-and-drop” system. PASTE, which stands for Programmable Addition via Site-specific Targeting Elements, still uses a Cas9 enzyme to cut DNA in a location specified by guide RNA, but the difference is that the new system cuts one strand and then the other, rather than both at once.

Insertion of the new genes is handled by enzymes called serine integrases, which are used by viruses to infect bacteria and insert their DNA into the target’s genome – ironic, given CRISPR’s origins as bacteria’s defense against these exact attacks. These integrases naturally seek out specific sequences in the target genome, so after the PASTE system makes its gentle cut it inserts the small “landing site” sequence that the integrases are looking for. Finally, the integrase inserts its DNA payload into the genome at that site. In a series of tests the team put the PASTE system to work in human liver cells, T cells and lymphoblasts, inserting 13 different genes into nine locations in the genome. The success rate was up to 60%, and generated very few errors at the site of insertion. Tests in mice with “humanized” livers only worked in about 2.5% of cells, however.

Not only is this technique more gentle and potentially safer, but the team says it was able to insert huge amounts of DNA at once – up to 36,000 base pairs in tests. This could make it particularly useful for replacing defective genes such as those that cause cystic fibrosis or Huntington’s disease. “It’s a new genetic way of potentially targeting these really hard-to-treat diseases,” said Omar Abudayyeh, senior author of the study. “We wanted to work toward what gene therapy was supposed to do at its original inception, which is to replace genes, not just correct individual mutations.” While there’s still plenty of work left to improve PASTE before it could be put to work treating these diseases, there’s no shortage of other gentle variations on CRISPR in development. That includes [CRISPR-Combo](#), [MAGESTIC](#), [RLR](#), and systems using [bacteriophages](#) or [jumping genes](#).

► The new research was published in the journal [Nature Biotechnology](#).

EDITOR’S COMMENT: Treat genetic diseases – this is fine only if it stays like this!

Scientists Revived Ancient ‘Zombie Viruses’ Frozen For Eons in Siberia

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-revived-ancient-zombie-viruses-frozen-for-eons-in-siberia>



As the world warms, permafrost is being exposed. (Tatiana Gasich/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Nov 25 – As the world warms up, vast tranches of permafrost [are melting](#), releasing material that's been trapped in its icy grip for years. [This includes](#) a slew of microbes that have lain dormant for hundreds of millennia in some cases. To study the emerging microbes, scientists have now revived a number of these



"zombie viruses" from Siberian permafrost, including one thought to be nearly 50,000 years old – a record age for a frozen virus returning to a state capable of infecting other organisms.

The team behind the work, led by microbiologist Jean-Marie Alempic from the French National Centre for Scientific Research, says these reanimating viruses are potentially a significant threat to public health, and further study needs to be done to assess the danger that these infectious agents could pose as they awake from their icy slumber.

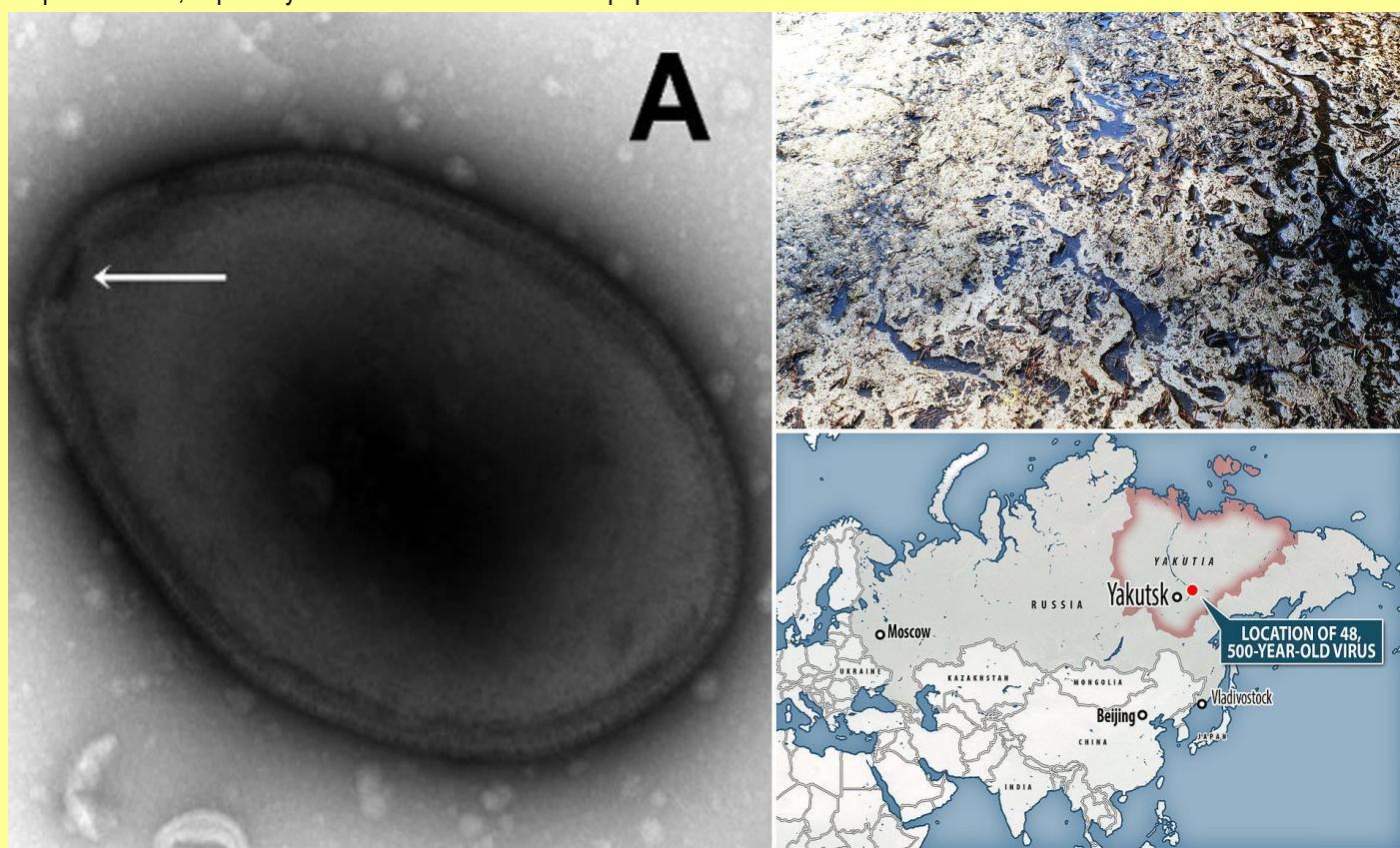
"One quarter of the Northern Hemisphere is underlain by permanently frozen ground, referred to as permafrost," write the researchers in [their paper](#).

"Due to climate warming, irreversibly thawing permafrost is releasing organic matter frozen for up to a million years, most of which decompose into carbon dioxide and methane, further enhancing the greenhouse effect."

The 48,500-year-old amoeba virus is actually one of 13 outlined in a new study currently in preprint, with nine of them thought to be tens of thousands of years old. The researchers established that each one was distinct from all other known viruses in terms of their genome.

While the record-breaking virus was found beneath a lake, other extraction locations included mammoth wool and the intestines of a Siberian wolf – all buried beneath permafrost. Using live single-cell amoeba cultures, the team proved that the viruses still had the potential to be infectious pathogens.

We're also seeing huge numbers of bacteria [released into the environment](#) as the world warms up, but given the antibiotics at our disposal it might be argued they would prove less threatening. A novel virus – [as with SARS-CoV-2](#) – could be much more problematic for public health, especially as the Arctic becomes more populated.



Pandoravirus yedoma was found in permafrost (top right) 52ft (16m) below the bottom of a lake in Yukechi Alas in Yakutia, Russia

"The situation would be much more disastrous in the case of plant, animal, or human diseases caused by the revival of an ancient unknown virus," [write the researchers](#).

"It is therefore legitimate to ponder the risk of ancient viral particles remaining infectious and getting back into circulation by the thawing of ancient permafrost layers." This team has form for diligently digging up viruses in Siberia, with a [previous study](#) detailing the discovery of a 30,000-year-old virus. Like the new record holder, that was also a pandoravirus, a giant big enough to be visible using light microscopy.



The revived virus has been given the name *Pandoravirus yedoma*, which acknowledges its size and [the type of permafrost soil](#) that it was found in. The researchers think there are many more viruses to find too, beyond those that only target amoebas.

Many of the viruses that will be released as the ice thaws will be completely unknown to us – although it remains to be seen how infectious these viruses will be once they're exposed to the light, heat and oxygen of the outdoor environment. These are all areas that could be investigated in future studies.

Virologist Eric Delwart from the University of California, San Francisco, agrees that these giant viruses are just the start when it comes to exploring what lies hidden beneath the permafrost. Though Delwart wasn't involved in the current study, he has plenty of experience resuscitating ancient plant viruses. "If the authors are indeed isolating live viruses from ancient permafrost, it is likely that the even smaller, simpler mammalian viruses would also survive frozen for eons," Delwart told [New Scientist](#).

► The research has not yet been peer-reviewed but is available on [bioRxiv](#).

EDITOR'S COMMENT: What I was afraid of! Scientific curiosity ...

Landmark 20-strain mRNA flu vaccine looks to prevent future pandemics

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/mrna-flu-vaccine-20-strain-prevent-future-pandemics/>

Nov 27 – An incredible new study published in the journal *Science* demonstrates the potential for a single mRNA vaccine to provide protection from all 20 known influenza A and B virus subtypes. It's hoped the vaccine, so far seen to be effective in preclinical animal models, would prevent future flu pandemics by promoting immunity against influenza strains yet to cross over from animals into humans.

Vaccines work by helping teach the immune system to recognize certain parts of a pathogen, so when the real thing strikes our bodies can quickly recall that training and fight back. Our annual flu vaccines generally concentrate on between two and four antigens from the strains of influenza most likely to be spreading at that time. Our recent COVID-19 vaccines, on the other hand, focus on just one iteration of the infamous SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. One of the hypothetical strengths of the recently emerged mRNA vaccine technology is its ability to present the body with a wide variety of different antigens at the same time. Older vaccine technology is unable to pack 10 or 20 different antigens into a single shot, but mRNA technology, in theory at least, doesn't face these limitations.



A new mRNA vaccine, not tested on humans, includes several strains of influenza with pandemic potential that have yet to cross over from animals

So far, with the introduction of the latest bivalent Omicron mRNA vaccine booster, researchers have incorporated two particular antigens into the one shot. But what if a single vaccine could help teach the immune system how to recognize dozens of different iterations of the same virus?





It is this very idea that researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania explored in their landmark study. The key antigenic target in influenza vaccines is a molecule called the hemagglutinin protein. It sits on the surface of the virus and is crucial to its infectivity. Each strain of influenza carries its own uniquely shaped hemagglutinin protein. The experimental mRNA vaccine tested in this new research covers 20 different influenza hemagglutinins: all 18 known subtypes of influenza A and two subtypes of influenza B.

The newly published study reported testing the multivalent vaccine in mice and ferrets. As explained by Scott Hensley, senior author on the new study, the big takeaway from these experiments is the animals seemed to develop distinct antibodies against all 20 influenza strains. This shows a single mRNA vaccine can effectively deliver broad protection against a large number of different antigens.

"Our new vaccine does not simply elicit antibodies that cross-react to every known influenza subtype," Hensley [explained on Twitter](#). "Instead, we found that the vaccine elicits distinct antibody lineages against all 20 different flu HAs [hemagglutinin antigens]."

The idea behind the novel vaccine is not to prevent influenza infection but to reduce the severity of disease that comes with those infections. And the initial animal studies do indicate that could be possible, with the vaccine effectively preventing severe disease in mice exposed to both the specific strains in the vaccine and other strains of influenza distinct from the specific 20 targets.

Perhaps the most unconventional aspect to this vaccine is that it contains antigens from influenza strains that have yet to cross over into humans. Many of the 20 antigenic targets are types of influenza only currently circulating in animals. But according to Hensley, the big goal here is to get ahead of the next pandemic by building a degree of broad immunity in the human population.

"[In mice] the vaccine prevented severe disease and death against viruses that were distinct from the vaccine components," Hensley [said on Twitter](#). "This resembles a pandemic situation. And that is our goal: to elicit a baseline level of immunity in the population that would not necessarily prevent infections with new pandemic strains – but rather prevent severe disease and death caused by new pandemic strains."

This new work is far from the first to explore the potential of [mRNA vaccine technology to fight influenza](#). A number of mRNA flu vaccines are in [various stages of being trialed](#). Most recently a team of researchers [demonstrated preclinical efficacy](#) of a mRNA vaccine that targets four specific influenza proteins and is believed to offer universal protection against most strains.

But what is particularly unique, and potentially controversial, about this new 20-strain mRNA vaccine is its targeting of many types of influenza that are not currently a problem in humans. The big hypothesis is that delivering a vaccine like this, particularly to very young children, could help prime their immune memory against all influenza subtypes for their entire life.

"The idea here is to have a vaccine that will give people a baseline level of immune memory to diverse flu strains, so that there will be far less disease and death when the next flu pandemic occurs," said Hensley. "We think this vaccine could significantly reduce the chances of ever getting a severe flu infection."

Adolfo García-Sastre, from Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, called this new research "interesting" and "promising." While he is cautious, suggesting we wait for human clinical trial data before concluding this to be a significant breakthrough, García-Sastre noted if this strategy does work it certainly would help us get ahead of potential future flu pandemics.

"[The study] demonstrates the ability to be able to develop multivalent mRNA vaccines that are able to immunize against 20 or perhaps more different antigens at the same time," García-Sastre said. "In this case, these are influenza virus antigens that encompass all possible influenza virus subtypes and variants, including those with pandemic potential."

It's a bold strategy that delivers on the [promise of mRNA technology](#) transforming the way we uses vaccines. But even if it does work it leaves plenty of questions for us all to grapple with. Are regulatory health authorities, or the general population, interested in a vaccine targeting future pandemics instead of immediate threats?

Nevertheless, further preclinical tests are ongoing and Phase 1 human trials are being planned.

●► The new study was published in the journal [Science](#).

'Ebola is real': Uganda to trial vaccines and shut schools early to contain outbreak

Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/11/18/africa/vaccines-uganda-ebola-outbreak-intl-cmd/index.html>

Nov 18 – Joseph Singiringabo has lost almost everything and everyone he held dear to Ebola. In a few short weeks, the 78-year-old lost his wife, his son, and a newborn granddaughter to the disease.

He is left taking care of three grandchildren under 13 after their mother fled the village to escape the danger of Ebola. His livestock was stolen while he was away in the required 21-day quarantine, leaving him destitute and desperate.





want these grandchildren to continue and get educated."

Seventy-eight-year-old Joseph Singiringabo has lost almost everyone he held dear to Ebola. *Mubende, Uganda*
Larry Madowo/CNN

I don't know where they got the virus from because I went and got checked and I left the hospital without any problem with these children of mine," he said, sitting on a log outside his modest house in Madudu, in Uganda's central Mubende district.

"The problem I am facing now is getting food. Secondly, I never went to school, but I

A deadly outbreak

Uganda is grappling with its deadliest Ebola outbreak in more than a decade, first detected in the Mubende district in late September. The deadly disease has ravaged families, leaving authorities scrambling to control its spread.

The 2012 Ebola outbreak in the Kibaale district in the country's western region, led to 17 deaths out of 24 confirmed cases but was declared over in less than 3 months.

Officials have launched aggressive contact tracing to track down relatives and friends who handled the bodies of first victims or attended funerals.

Some escaped from quarantine facilities, others traveled as far as the capital Kampala, and a few visited traditional healers and witchdoctors for treatment instead.

"Some of the patients are still hiding and they don't know that they have Ebola so they're out there in the community," public health physician Dr. Jackson Amone told CNN.

He has been involved in every Ebola outbreak in Uganda as well as in Sierra Leone in 2017. "We need to do case investigation, a lot of contact tracing, and community engagement so that those who present with Ebola symptoms are brought for testing before we release them."

Dr. Amone is leading the teams operating the Ebola Treatment Units in Mubende. The first was set up in a hurry on the edge of the Mubende Regional Referral Hospital.

Health workers don extensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enter the red zones where patients are receiving treatment. In one zone, a health worker cradles a three-month-old baby suspected of having been infected. Her mother and another sibling are undergoing treatment for Ebola and the disease has already claimed the life of her father.

It's a cruel welcome to the world for the infant who is wrapped in a blanket as steady rain falls on the makeshift treatment center.

It's a familiar story across this region as Ebola spreads despite the Ugandan government's best efforts.

"This Ebola is much easier to deal with than either corona(virus) or AIDS. The main problem here is behavior change," President Yoweri Museveni told the nation in a Tuesday night [address](#), stressing the need to follow the government's procedures for those who come into contact with the disease.

Vaccine trials offer hope

Ebola can spread from person to person through direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids such as saliva, sweat, semen, or feces, or through contaminated objects like bedding or needles.

"It doesn't spread through the air like COVID-19 and does not hide for some months before it shows itself like AIDS," Museveni said in his televised address.

The country had so far recorded 55 deaths from Ebola, 141 confirmed cases and 73 people had recovered, he said.



Health minister Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero told CNN she expects Uganda to have the outbreak under control by April if communities cooperate with the government.



Health workers don extensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enter the red zones where patients are receiving treatment (Larry Madowo/CNN)

There are currently two licensed Ebola vaccines, [according to the World Health Organization](#), but they were developed to be safe and protective against the Zaire strain of the Ebola virus.

Unlike the previous Zaire ebolavirus, the Sudan strain currently circulating in Uganda has no known effective treatment or approved vaccine.

However, the country is about to roll out three trial vaccines that have been certified as safe by the World Health Organization (WHO) working group.

The WHO said the first doses would be [shipped to Uganda next week](#) and the country expects to expand the vaccine trials after reviewing results from the initial phase.

They are manufactured by the International Aids Vaccine Iniative (IAVI), the Sabin Vaccine Institute USA and a third developed by the University of Oxford and the Jenner Institute UK.

"Our further testing is about efficacy, and how long it protects. We are looking at 3,000 contacts of confirmed cases so we'll be doing ring vaccination," Aceng Ocero said, referring to a vaccine process that administers vaccines only to people in close contact with infected patients.

"If we have a confirmed case, then the contacts are the ones who are given the vaccine and they are followed up for 29 days because we want to see if they can quickly generate antibodies and can protect themselves from getting into full-blown disease," Aceng Ocero added.

Obstacles of tradition and religion

Public health officials believe that cases are stabilizing due to increased vigilance, but tradition and religion are holding back progress. One community in Kassanda district, central Uganda, exhumed a body that had been buried safely by health workers to perform religious rites.

It led to "an explosion of over 41 cases within 5 days and 10 deaths," President Museveni said in his address. He has now barred traditional healers and witchdoctors from taking clients during the Ebola outbreak.

Infections are also rising as it is hard to keep people apart in close-knit communal settings. Robert Twinamasiko, a 30-year-old driver is undergoing treatment after he helped an infected friend to an ambulance. The friend and one other person involved both died.

Twinamasiko has spent 17 days in hospital but says he has no regrets. Although he looked frail, he was making a recovery and told CNN he was looking forward to going home.

"I'm just waiting for my blood work to be discharged but the world out there should know that Ebola is real," he said from inside a red zone.

Uganda is also trying to contain the spread of the disease by closing the school term early to avoid an outbreak of Ebola in schools which could be hard to manage. "If you have one learner in a class testing positive, the entire class has to undergo quarantine. But also, you will not be 100% sure that that learner did not have contact with other learners outside that class," Minister Aceng Ocero explained.

She said she was frustrated that Uganda wasn't getting enough credit internationally for managing the Ebola crisis. "We have experience. This is our eighth Ebola outbreak. Every time we get an outbreak, our experience increases," she said.



Some global health experts [have criticized Uganda's initial response to the outbreak](#) as slow and inept. Some partners in the donor and diplomatic community have also bristled about how much information Ugandan authorities are sharing with them.

WHO recommends new name for monkeypox disease

Source: <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-11-2022-who-recommends-new-name-for-monkeypox-disease>

Nov 28 – Following a series of consultations with global experts, WHO will begin using a new preferred term “**mpos**” as a synonym for monkeypox. Both names will be used simultaneously for one year while “monkeypox” is phased out.

When the outbreak of monkeypox expanded earlier this year, racist and stigmatizing language online, in other settings and in some communities was observed and reported to WHO. In several meetings, public and private, a number of individuals and countries raised concerns and asked WHO to propose a way forward to change the name.

Assigning names to new and, very exceptionally, to existing diseases is the responsibility of WHO under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the WHO Family of International Health Related Classifications through a consultative process which includes WHO Member States.

WHO, in accordance with the ICD update process, held consultations to gather views from a range of experts, as well as countries and the general public, who were invited to submit suggestions for new names. Based on these consultations, and further discussions with WHO's Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO recommends the following:

- Adoption of the new synonym mpox in English for the disease.
- Mpox will become a preferred term, replacing monkeypox, after a transition period of one year. This serves to mitigate the concerns raised by experts about confusion caused by a name change in the midst of a global outbreak. It also gives time to complete the ICD update process and to update WHO publications.
- The synonym mpox will be included in the ICD-10 online in the coming days. It will be a part of the official 2023 release of ICD-11, which is the current global standard for health data, clinical documentation and statistical aggregation.
- The term “monkeypox” will remain a searchable term in ICD, to match historic information.

Considerations for the recommendations included rationale, scientific appropriateness, extent of current usage, pronounceability, usability in different languages, absence of geographical or zoological references, and the ease of retrieval of historical scientific information.

Usually, the ICD updating process can take up to several years. In this case, the process was accelerated, though following the standard steps.

Various advisory bodies were heard during the consultation process, including experts from the medical and scientific and classification and statistics advisory committees which constituted of representatives from government authorities of 45 different countries.

The issue of the use of the new name in different languages was extensively discussed. The preferred term mpox can be used in other languages. If additional naming issues arise, these will be addressed via the same mechanism. Translations are usually discussed in formal collaboration with relevant government authorities and the related scientific societies.

WHO will adopt the term mpox in its communications, and encourages others to follow these recommendations, to minimize any ongoing negative impact of the current name and from adoption of the new name.

COVID-19 Infection Disrupts Gut Microbiome

Source: <https://www.insideprecisionmedicine.com/topics/translational-research/microbiome/covid-19-infection-disrupts-gut-microbiome/>

Nov 29 – Research from Rutgers University shows that acute infection with COVID-19 leads to disruptions in the gut microbiome, which may at least partly explain gastrointestinal issues experienced by many patients during the acute and recovery phases of infection.

These microbial imbalances were worsened by treatment with antibiotics, which were given to many COVID-19 patients earlier in the pandemic to try and stop secondary bacterial infections.

As reported in the journal [Molecular Biomedicine](#), the researchers carried out 16S rRNA sequencing of stool samples from 20 COVID-19 positive patients, 20 people who had recovered from COVID-19 and 20 healthy controls.

“We wanted to gain a deeper understanding by looking at specimens that would give us an indication about the state of the gut microbiome in people,” said Martin Blaser, a professor at Rutgers University, and co-senior author on the study in a press statement.





The results showed significant differences in microbiome composition in COVID-19 patients compared with the group of recovered people and healthy controls. For example, Bacteroidaceae and Ruminococcaceae species of bacteria were present at lower numbers in COVID-19 patients compared with the other two groups. “In contrast, Prevotellaceae increased in abundance with acute COVID-19 infection which reached the highest levels post-recovery, a trend particularly apparent in subjects without antibiotic use,” note the authors.

Of the three groups, 10% of the control, 60% of the COVID-19 positive, and 20% of the recovered individuals had taken antibiotics during the previous 6 months. The research team found these individuals had more severe gut dysbiosis than those who did not take antibiotics in the same group.

“What we found was that, while there were differences between people who had COVID-19 and those who were not ill, the biggest difference from others was seen in those who had been administered antibiotics,” emphasized Blaser.

This was a relatively small and observational study, but the researchers now want to try and confirm their findings and also carry out follow-up testing on the participants of this study to see how their microbiomes change over time.

“Further investigation of patients across the severity gradient in expanded longitudinal cohorts will enhance understanding of the role of the gut microbiome in COVID-19 disease progression and recovery,” conclude the authors. “These findings may help identify microbial targets and probiotic supplements for improving COVID-19 treatment.”



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The Covid test left her out of the maternity ward, the woman gives birth standing in the middle of the road in **China**

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What Have We Learned from COVID-19? Apparently Not Much

By Pandora Report

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221129-what-have-we-learned-from-covid19-apparently-not-much>

Nov 29 – This week has had a lot of more of the same old frustrating updates and conclusions in terms of COVID-19 and our preparedness for future global health threats. The WHO's [Global Vaccine Market Report](#) for 2022 found that, "Despite progress in recent decades, global market vaccine dynamics are not fully conducive to the development, supply and access for vital vaccines for public health," limited profit potential continues to hamper investment in vaccines labeled priorities, and (you guessed it) "Lower-income countries have struggled to access critical vaccines – such as against COVID-19 in 2021 and cervical cancer vaccine – that are in-demand by wealthier countries." While countries like the US have had the luxury to hold onto [excess vaccine doses](#) throughout the pandemic, others have gone without. However, as most are keenly aware, this has been far from indicative of a stable situation in the US health system.

Kaiser Health News [reported](#) this week that the roughly 4,000 epidemiologists, communication specialists, and public health nurses hired by the CDC Foundation to augment local and state health departments nationally will lose their jobs as the foundation's \$289 million in COVID-19 relief funding runs dry. Pierce Nelson, a spokesperson for CDC Foundation (an independent non-profit that supports CDC), indicated that no more than 800 of these 4,000 hires would remain in their positions. This means many local and state health departments are facing serious staffing shortages as we face a potential winter surge in COVID-19 cases, a concerning start to [flu season](#) coupled with lagging [vaccination rates](#), [exploding STI rates](#), and growing [calls](#) for a health emergency declaration with more than [3/4 of US pediatric hospital beds](#) occupied in large part because of this year's explosion of RSV cases.

While the administration has largely moved on from treating COVID-19 like an active emergency, leaving a slim chance of 4,000 professionals hired using COVID-19 emergency funds keeping their jobs, this points to a much larger problem-public health is chronically underfunded in the United States. Those 4,000 are dwarfed by the [at least 80,000 new public health employees](#) estimated to be required nationally to allow state and local department to consistently offer a minimal level of services. In 2020, just [28 percent](#) of local health departments had an epidemiologist or statistician on staff.

Furthermore, public health workers [left the field](#) in large numbers during the pandemic, citing burnout and public abuse related to COVID-19 rules and economic downturn. Though [\\$3 billion](#) is expected to come to state and local departments this month to help support building a public health workforce, another one-off lump sum is not enough, especially after thousands like those hired by CDC Foundation will have already had to move on with their lives.

Today, at least [1,072,285](#) people in the US have lost their lives to COVID-19, with 555 of those reported yesterday alone. COVID-19 is the [third leading cause](#) of death in the US, behind two noncommunicable diseases-heart disease and cancer. Even if it were true that COVID-19 is no longer a major part of our lives, the fact still remains that these numbers are as high as they are because of how poorly the US responded to the pandemic. This [boom and bust](#) funding cycle clearly does not work for public health. Consistent, yearly, secure funding is needed to make sure we have a competent, stable public health workforce that is well-supplied and able to handle whatever we have to deal with next. Dr. Katie Schenk, who served as a Senior Epidemiologist on CDC Foundation COVID-19 emergency fund contracts at the Illinois and District of Columbia Health Departments, was quoted by KHN on this subject, saying "How do you explain that there is no funding for employment in our field when there is clearly so much work to be done?" she asked. "It's to the detriment of the public health system, which is shedding staff like there's no tomorrow."

Tossing a bucket of water towards the neglected, dry, wooden house that is already engulfed in flames is never going to work. Pre-COVID-19, just [3%](#) of healthcare expenditures in the United States were for public health. In 2019, US the National Health Expenditure sat at [\\$3.8 trillion](#), or \$11,582 per capita, accounting for 17.7 percent of GDP. That number grew nearly [10 percent](#) in 2020 to \$4.1 trillion, or \$12,530 per person, accounting for 19.7 percent of GDP. Of course, in the middle of surging hospital occupation and the rush to find a vaccine, the US spent a lot on health care and related activities like research and insurance. And, to be fair, public health funding accounted for 5.4 percent of NHE in 2020, but it was in the middle of a pandemic.

Furthermore, in August, Brookings [estimated](#) that around 16 million working-age Americans have long COVID. In a longitudinal survey conducted by the US Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, [24.1 percent](#) of people who contracted COVID-19 experienced symptoms for three months or longer. At that point, 70 percent of Americans had contracted COVID-19, meaning if that 24.1 percent holds roughly true in the broader population, about 34 million working-age Americans had long COVID at some point. As many as 4 million workers are likely out of work because of long COVID too, according to [Brookings](#). The annual cost of those lost wages is estimated to be between \$170 and \$230 billion annually and it is likely to rise in absence of substantial policy changes like expanded sick leave, improved employer accommodations, and wider access to





disability insurance in addition to improved prevention. To be sure, this all costs a lot of money. However, it would not have cost nearly as much if we had invested more in things like public health way before COVID-19 even emerged.

This highlights two very important points: 1) Americans spend much more than comparable countries on healthcare, but they have poorer outcomes, and 2) much like it is cheaper to invest in preventative care and social services that improve quality of life rather than pay for medical care down the line when someone is seriously sick, it is cheaper to invest in public health way before a crisis comes. In fact, Academy Health [found](#) in 2018 that “Every \$1 invested in public health yields improved health outcomes equivalent to as much as \$88 in expenditures saved by county public health departments.” One [study](#) found that other OECD country spent on average about \$2 on social services for every \$1 of health care spending, compared to the United States 55¢. The US spends nearly twice as much as the average OECD country on health care as a *share of the economy*, yet it has a [lower life expectancy](#) than comparable high-income countries like Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The US also has among the highest [chronic disease burden](#) in the OECD, and its [obesity rate](#) is two times higher than the OECD average. Finally, according to the Commonwealth Fund, the US has the highest rate of [avoidable mortality](#) among its peers because Americans do not receive timely, high-quality care. All this points not only to problems in efficiency and delivery in healthcare, but also to major risk factors that make the US much more vulnerable to health security threats.

Tackling healthcare spending, insurance issues, and broadening access to care are objectively difficult to accomplish in the current US political environment. Public health has similarly suffered from partisan politics over the course of the pandemic, from the national level all the way to rural county [commissions](#). However, at the end of the day, this is national security at stake. The US is suffering major economic hardships because of the impacts of COVID-19, including the loss of millions from the workforce on top of global inflation. Lack of equitable access to quality, timely care, lack of funding for community and state-level public health, and an overall reactionary system create a population that is bogged down by high chronic disease burden and slim options for healthcare. That population by definition is not secure. Patchwork and crisis-dependent funding is not cutting it and if we do not do something about it now, we will be in a similar or much worse situation not long from now when the next global health crisis strikes.

When Will COVID-19 Become Endemic?

By Claire Klobucista

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221129-when-will-covid19-become-endemic>

Nov 29 – Government leaders are optimistic that COVID-19 is becoming endemic, meaning more predictable and manageable. But many scientists say it's too soon to behave like the pandemic is over.

What does “endemic” mean?

Epidemiologists say a disease is endemic when its presence becomes steady in a particular region, or at least predictable, as with seasonal influenza. But there's no consensus on the conditions for meeting this benchmark. By this broad definition, endemicity doesn't necessarily mean a disease is rare or common, mild or severe. For example, infection rates can still be high; they just have to remain static. Malaria, which is endemic in dozens of countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, killed more than six hundred thousand people in 2020.

It's easier to define endemicity in retrospect, when scientists are able to [determine a baseline level](#) because the disease has reached an equilibrium. This can be possible when the general population has protection from the disease, whether from vaccination or prior infection.

What does public health policy look like when a disease becomes endemic?

An endemic disease can still (and often does) require a robust policy response. The United States and many other countries urge individuals to get a flu vaccination each year, and they promote practices such as frequent handwashing and covering one's mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. For malaria and HIV, which is also endemic, various global initiatives are ongoing to develop more effective and accessible prevention tools. However, the responses are typically not as intense as those during a pandemic, when surging infections prompt the [type of tight restrictions](#) seen throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Is COVID-19 becoming an endemic disease?

It's still too early to tell. Many government and industry leaders are promoting policy shifts in that direction, but officials from the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health experts have warned against



treating COVID-19 as an endemic disease. By the end of 2022, there were several hundred thousand new infections and hundreds of deaths being reported worldwide each day, and new variants of the virus continued to emerge. However, with new vaccines and treatments, the number of people dying from COVID-19 had gone down dramatically. The WHO didn't declare any new strains of omicron a "variant of concern" in 2022, and by year's end, none had produced the kind of toll the world saw with delta or the original strain of omicron.

"It could mean we've hit this point where molecular evolution has played out its hand, or it could be this is the quiet before the storm," the University of Minnesota's Michael Osterholm tells CFR.

The world has made significant progress immunizing against COVID-19, but roughly one-third of people have yet to receive a vaccine dose, and the vaccination rate has slowed. At the same time, health experts have raised concerns about waning immunity in vaccinated people and vaccines' reduced effectiveness against new variants.

Some countries are already treating COVID-19 as an endemic disease, while others, namely China, are [keeping rigid pandemic measures](#) in place. These policies can depend on infection trends as well as on the social mood, says CFR's Jennifer Nuzzo. "In terms of when a pandemic is over, it's really a social term," she says. "We don't have an epidemiologic criteria for the end of a pandemic." Portugal, with among the highest vaccination rates, was [an early model](#) for dropping many of the tighter COVID-19 restrictions. Mexico and Spain have also moved toward treating the virus as endemic. And in a September interview, U.S. President Joe Biden stirred debate by stating that "the pandemic is over," though a federal public health emergency declaration remains in place.

What are the risks of prematurely thinking the pandemic is over?

The predominant risk is that the world will again find itself largely unprepared in the face of a more dangerous variant of the virus, and the possibility remains that a variant could emerge against which existing vaccines are ineffective.

Complacency and government inaction contributed to [the devastating surge](#) of the delta variant across India in early 2021. And the United States found itself scrambling as the omicron variant spread like wildfire at the end of that year, without sufficient tests and other supplies to manage the record infection levels. U.S. health officials say the [majority of Americans](#) have been infected with COVID-19 at least once, but they caution people not to presume they have protection for the future.

What should governments do until the world reaches an equilibrium with COVID-19?

The best-case scenario is that broad immunity from vaccination and previous infections indeed prompts the transition to endemic COVID-19, but that is just [one possibility](#). Governments should be prepared to handle the worst, such as a case in which the world's current vaccines are unable to defend against a new variant.

The WHO continues to advocate for vaccination, particularly across Africa and parts of the Middle East where small portions of the population are immunized. Experts including Nuzzo and Osterholm also urge dedicating more resources toward [developing vaccines and treatments](#) and making them more widely available. Scaling up testing capabilities and improving monitoring and surveillance networks are also high on the list, since having accurate, regular measurements of infection levels in a community allows officials to implement the most effective response.

Claire Klobucista is Deputy Editor at CFR.

SARS-CoV-2 May Be Thwarted by Nasally Administered DARPins

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/topics/drug-discovery/sars-cov-2-may-be-thwarted-by-nasally-administered-darpins/>

Nov 29 – Diminutive proteins called DARPins have been engineered that are capable of binding to SARS-CoV-2. They neutralized several SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern, and in a mouse model of [COVID-19](#), intranasal administration of one of the DARPins reduced viral burden in respiratory passages. These findings, which were reported in *Nature Chemical Biology*, suggest that DARPins are promising candidates for the prevention and treatment of infection by SARS-CoV-2.

DARPins, or designed ankyrin repeat proteins, are genetically engineered antibody mimetic proteins derived from naturally occurring ankyrin proteins, which participate in various kinds of high-affinity protein-protein interactions. DARPins are smaller than conventional protein biologics, about one-eighth the size of monoclonal antibodies. Moreover, they are less prone to "go bad" during prolonged storage at moderate-to-high temperatures and can be made in large quantities at low cost. Accordingly, DARPins are, potentially, more affordable than conventional protein biologics.





The SARS-CoV-2-binding DARPins were engineered by scientists in the laboratory of Zhilei Chen, PhD, at Texas A&M University School of Medicine. In an article titled, "[A potent and broad neutralization of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern by DARPins](#)," the scientists described how they engineered and selected two synthetic proteins—FSR16m and FSR22—for the possible treatment of SARS-CoV-2 infection. "FSR16m and FSR22 are trimeric proteins composed of DARPin SR16m or SR22 fused with a T4 foldon," the article's authors indicated. "Despite selection by a spike protein from a now historical SARS-CoV-2 strain, FSR16m and FSR22 exhibit broad-spectrum neutralization of SARS-CoV-2 strains, inhibiting authentic B.1.351, B.1.617.2, and BA.1.1 viruses."

When the scientists conducted cryo-electron microscopy experiments, they determined that their DARPins recognized a region of the receptor-binding domain overlapping a critical portion of the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2)-binding surface. When the scientists intranasally administered the DARPins to mice inoculated B.1.617.2, the mice showed less weight loss and 10–100-fold lower viral burden in upper and lower respiratory tracts. "This study offers the possibility of an on-demand nasal spray able to tackle COVID-19 either before or after virus exposure," Chen said. Her team's discovery provides another, potentially lower-cost therapeutic option for those who cannot receive traditional vaccines or are considered high risk.

"The ability of these DARPins to exhibit increased neutralization potency toward SARS-CoV-2 variants contrasts with many human-derived anti-SARS-CoV-2 monoclonal antibodies, which lose neutralization potency," the article's authors noted. "The following reasons may account for this phenomenon: (a) [The potency of] in vitro engineered DARPins ... appears to be less affected by the virus evolution history. (b) [Due] to its much smaller size, a trimer DARPin can easily engage all three monomers in a spike trimer concurrently. (c) [Both] DARPins engage key residues within the hACE2-binding interface. As emerging natural variants of concern tend to exhibit higher infectivity and ACE2 binding affinity, these variants may become more susceptible to binding and neutralization by our DARPin molecules."

Medical Masks vs. N95s May Offer Similar Prevention vs. COVID: Study

Ann Intern Med. Published online November 29, 2022. [Full text, Editorial](#)

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/984734>

Nov 29 – Regular medical masks might provide protection similar to that of N95 respirators in preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection among healthcare workers, according to the first randomized trial that tested the two types of masks head-to-head in the COVID-19 era. Owing to limitations in the study, however, the authors were only formally able to conclude that healthcare workers who wore medical masks while treating COVID-19 patients were not twice as likely to contract the virus as workers wearing N95 respirators.

"Nonetheless, this trial provides the best evidence to date on comparative effectiveness of mask types in preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection in health care workers providing routine patient care," writes Roger Chou, MD, in an [editorial](#) published with the study.

In summarizing, Chou said that "the results indicate that medical masks may be similar to N95 respirators in Omicron-era settings with high COVID-19" rates, but the researchers set a low bar for establishing whether one is more effective than the other.

"Therefore, the results are not definitive," Chou writes. In the study, [published](#) Tuesday in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the authors evaluated 1009 healthcare workers in Canada, Israel, Pakistan, and Egypt who had not been vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 and had not previously been infected by the virus. Participants were randomly assigned to wear either a medical mask or an N95 respirator for 10 consecutive weeks. The study period was from May 2020 to March 2022. Reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction tests confirmed that COVID occurred in 52 of 497 (10.46%) participants in the medical mask group, vs 47 of 507 (9.27%) in the N95 respirator group (hazard ratio [HR], 1.14; 95% CI, 0.77 – 1.69). The World Health Organization recommends medical masks (sometimes called surgical masks) for routine care, while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that N95s be used while caring for COVID-19 patients. Prior to the pandemic, research showed that N95s and medical masks carried similar risks while caring for patients with influenza-like illnesses. Chou said decision-makers should keep in mind the uncertainty of whether one mask type is more effective than the other and should take worker preferences, N95 respirator availability, and resource constraints into consideration.

Biden administration prepares to end monkeypox emergency declaration

Source: <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/11/30/biden-ends-monkeypox-emergency-declaration-00071491>

Nov 30 – The Biden administration is eyeing an end to its public health emergency declaration for mpox, a sign that officials believe they've brought the monthslong outbreak under control. Health officials are likely to issue a 60-day notice later this week for winding down the declaration, two people with knowledge of the matter told POLITICO. Such a move would put it on track to officially expire by Jan. 31.





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The decision is not yet final, and could still change, the people cautioned. But the discussion comes as U.S. cases of mpox — the virus known as [monkeypox until recently](#) — have hit new lows, easing a health crisis that predominantly gripped the community of men who have sex with men throughout much of the spring and summer.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is now recording just a handful of new infections per day, down from more than 400 average daily cases at the peak of the outbreak. The decline has also alleviated initial fears that the virus would spill into the broader population, further complicating efforts to contain the spread.

The Biden administration plans to keep its White House-led mpox response operation intact into next year, with officials stressing more work is still needed to drive down cases and guard against a future resurgence.

But with average daily case counts now in the teens, senior Biden officials are reevaluating whether to keep the emergency declaration in place. Ending the emergency designation for mpox is not expected to have any major impact on the current response effort, the people said.

Some administration officials also see the potential unwinding of the mpox emergency declaration as a test run for eventually ending the yearslong Covid emergency — a more complex challenge that Biden aides expect to happen at some point next year.

In a statement, a Health and Human Services Department spokesperson said the department was committed to giving states a 60-day notice before any termination or expiration of the mpox public health emergency.

The Biden administration first declared the mpox outbreak a public health emergency in August, amid growing criticism over its sluggish early attempts to contain the virus. Health officials at the time were struggling to track the spread of cases more than a month after mpox's arrival in the U.S., as well as expand testing and accelerate the distribution of a treatment.

The Aug. 4 [emergency declaration aimed to free up new resources](#) and speed the delivery of vaccines at what Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Robert Califf called a "critical inflection point." The White House around the same time also moved to take direct control of the response, appointing two coordinators to direct the government's efforts.

Federal and state health officials have since pushed aggressively to limit the virus' transmission and vaccinate at-risk groups. Though the U.S. has recorded nearly 30,000 mpox cases to date, the most of any country by far, the number of new infections has dropped steadily throughout the fall. The health department [opted to renew](#) the emergency declaration for another 90 days in early November, keeping it in place through the beginning of next year.



Published November 21, 2022





'Critical opportunity' to protect against biological warfare, countries hear

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1131097>

Nov 28 – The international community should push ahead with stalled plans to prevent biological weapons from being developed in the wake of COVID-19, the UN's top disarmament official insisted on Monday. In a speech to the [Biological Weapons Convention](#), Izumi Nakamitsu explained that the issue of verifying whether biological toxins are being made has been deadlocked for 20 years. "While bringing biosafety and biosecurity to a much higher prominence, the pandemic also demonstrated the disruption that could be caused if biological agents were to be used in a deliberate manner as weapons of war or terror," Ms. Nakamitsu said.

Biosafety first

Novel ideas need to be found to leverage "the tools of modern science to develop a politically acceptable verification protocol", the UN disarmament official maintained, as countries gathered for three weeks of meetings – a once in every five-year review of the Biological Weapons Convention, that was delayed by a further year, because of [COVID-19](#). "No topic should be off the table in the quest to strengthen the Convention," she continued, urging support for peaceful scientific cooperation, enhanced transparency in research and the promotion of emerging technologies for good. "This Review Conference therefore presents a critical opportunity for States to come together to strengthen this vital Convention," Ms. Nakamitsu insisted.

Consensus-building

Although it is deemed unlikely that consensus will be achieved on restarting negotiations on legally binding protocols in the coming weeks in Geneva, the designated President of this Ninth Review Conference, Italy's Leonardo Bencini, said that there might well be agreement on "the way forward to restart discussions on the issue of verification and compliance".

Experimental risk

Ambassador Bencini further explained that unlike nuclear weapons development "in theory you have hundreds of thousands of facilities, establishments, **that could be weaponized**". To help to prevent this, some Member States are pushing for an "open and transparent" code of conduct for scientists working within the remit of the Convention, the Ambassador said. This would "make it more difficult for anybody to develop programmes without other colleagues knowing this", he added. "We need to have something which is not just concerns the ethical commitment of scientists, to behave in a certain way and to share information among the scientific community but within the scientific community, but also something that could be implemented at the national level."

Coronavirus factor

Ambassador Bencini noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had also highlighted the need for the Biological Weapons Convention to be updated, to take into account the danger of a global pandemic-like threat to humans, animals and plant life. The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention is the primary international framework for tackling the threat of biological warfare. It prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxic weapons. There are currently 184 States Parties to the international treaty. "Rising tensions around the globe are instigating a geopolitical crisis, which is putting multilateral disarmament under great stress," Ms. Nakamitsu said. "Multilateral processes have been stalled or curtailed. The international community should remain vigilant as we have seen norms against other previously prohibited weapons eroding in recent years."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Bla-bla-bla! The essence is that all big powers can develop BWAs while a few others do have the know how because they had them in the past. Easy to make but impossible to contain in just one area/country BWAs will continue to be a threat and toxins to be used for isolated assassinations or mass media terror propaganda (e.g., anthrax and ricin letters).

BIGGEST COVER-UP IN HISTORY: I worked with the Wuhan lab – I tried to warn them & I KNOW Covid was a lab leak

Source: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/20543847/wuhan-lab-warning-covid-lab-leak/>

Dec 03 – A scientist who worked closely with the Wuhan lab has claimed Covid was genetically engineered - and leaked from the facility. Dr Andrew Huff, former vice president of EcoHealth Alliance, claims to have had a ringside seat to what he brands one of the greatest cover-ups in history - and the "biggest US





intelligence failure since 9/11". The [Wuhan Institute of Virology](#) - a high security lab specialising in coronaviruses - has been in the eye of the storm as questions rage over whether [Covid](#) could have escaped from its lab.



Both [China](#) and the lab have furiously denied any allegations - but [evidence of a lab leak](#) has been piling up over the last two years as scientists, researchers and governments hunt for answers and [step forward with evidence](#).

Dozens of experts have suggested Covid could have escaped from the Wuhan lab through an infected researcher, improper disposal of waste, or potential breaches in the security at the site.

Even the head of the World Health Organisation reportedly believes Covid did [leak from the lab after a "catastrophic accident"](#).

In his new book - *The Truth About Wuhan* - whistleblower Dr Huff claims the pandemic was the result of the US government's funding of dangerous genetic engineering of coronaviruses in China.

The epidemiologist said China's gain-of-function experiments - carried out with shoddy biosecurity - led to a lab leak at the US-funded Wuhan Institute of Virology.

"EcoHealth Alliance and foreign laboratories did not have the adequate control measures in place for ensuring proper biosafety, biosecurity, and risk management, ultimately resulting in the lab leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology," he said in his book, an exclusive pre-release copy of which was provided to The Sun Online.

EcoHealth Alliance had been studying different coronaviruses in bats for more than ten years with funding from the National Institutes of Health - and developed close working ties with the Wuhan lab.

Dr Huff, who worked at EcoHealth Alliance from 2014 to 2016 and served as vice president from 2015, worked on the classified side of the research programme as a US government scientist.

The army veteran, from Michigan, said the organisation taught the Wuhan lab the "best existing methods to engineer bat coronaviruses to attack other species" for many years.

And he claimed "China knew from day one that this was a genetically engineered agent".

"The US government is to blame for the transfer of dangerous biotechnology to the Chinese," he said.

Speaking to The Sun Online, Dr Huff added: "I was terrified by what I saw. We were just handing them bioweapon technology."





In his book, the emerging infectious diseases expert claims "greedy scientists killed millions of people globally" - and goes as far as to claim the US government covered it up.

Former intelligence chiefs and diplomats have already claimed Covid was leaked from a Wuhan lab in the "cover-up of the century".

Dr Huff said: "Nobody should be surprised that the Chinese lied about the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 and then went to extraordinary lengths to make it appear as if the disease naturally emerged."

"The shocking part of all of this is how the United States government lied to all of us."

In 2009, the Wuhan lab started working with the EcoHealth Alliance on a USAID programme - called PREDICT - focusing on emerging pandemic threats.

PREDICT was designed to help detect and find zoonotic viruses with pandemic potential - including coronaviruses.

Shi Zhengli - the Wuhan virologist who famously became known as "Batwoman" - hoped the programme would create an early-warning system for pandemics.

But in 2014, Dr Huff was asked to review a funding proposal which revealed that gain of function work was being carried out to create SARS-CoV-2 - which causes Covid.

Gain of function work sees viruses souped up to more easily infect humans to help researchers test scientific theories, develop new technologies and find treatments for infectious diseases. But the risky research method can pose safety and security concerns - and it's banned in many countries.

It was originally banned in the US in 2014 — but was reintroduced by the NIH in 2017.

Dr Huff realised the EcoHealth Alliance was working closely with the Wuhan lab on gain of function research, with the support of USAID - a US government department.

He soon realised the virus would never occur in nature and had been developed into a much more powerful pathogen in the lab.

Dr Huff believes Covid was genetically engineered in Wuhan through gain of function research funded by the US government - and poor biosafety led to a lab leak.

"EcoHealth Alliance developed SARS-CoV-2 and was responsible for the development of the agent SARS-CoV-2 during my employment at the organisation," he said.

Although he pointed out he has seen no evidence China deliberately released the virus.

Dr Huff believes the US-funded project was "mostly a global fishing expedition for coronaviruses" to carry out gain of function work or for intelligence collection - rather than preventing future pandemics.

"At the time, I felt like the project seemed more like intelligence collection than scientific research and development," he said in his book.

The scientist said the PREDICT programme wasn't collecting the data it should have been - and he told The Sun Online it appeared to be a "giant intelligence operation".

He alleges the US were using the project to assess the bioweapon capabilities of foreign labs - including the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Sounding the alarm

During a meeting with top executives in 2015 and 2016, Dr Huff said he sounded the alarm over biosafety and biosecurity risks in contract laboratories.

"I was concerned that EcoHealth Alliance did not have enough visibility or firsthand knowledge of what was happening at foreign laboratories contracted and managed by EcoHealth Alliance," he said.

Dr Huff said US government officials again issued warnings in January 2018 about the Wuhan lab - including the major shortage of experts needed to safely manage research on deadly coronaviruses.

"It could be reasonably argued that EcoHealth Alliance set up China to fail," he said.

And when Covid emerged in late 2019, he said China "and some of their US government collaborators at the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense went into full cover-up mode".

Dr Huff said he "has good reason to believe that the US government was alerted to the outbreak in August or October 2019".

He quit EcoHealth Alliance in 2016 "due to a large number of ethical concerns with the scientific work and EcoHealth Alliance as a whole".

But in late 2019, he was suddenly offered a position at Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) - and was told he would need top security clearance and a polygraph for the job.

THE TRUTH ABOUT WUHAN

HOW I UNCOVERED THE BIGGEST LIE IN HISTORY

DR. ANDREW G. HUFF
FORMER ECOHEALTH ALLIANCE VICE PRESIDENT
AND SENIOR SCIENTIST





Dr Huff now believes he was approached for the role to keep him quiet about the origins of Covid.

"It is my belief that people working within the US government potentially identified me as a risk to knowing firsthand that the SARS-CoV-2 disease emergence event was a consequence of the US government's sponsorship of the genetic engineering of SARS-CoV-2 domestically and abroad," he said in his book.

"If I would have accepted the position, then I suspect that DARPA would have disclosed restricted information to me, which would have consequently prevented me from discussing any of this information publicly, like I have been and am doing now."

He added: "About a month after the pandemic began, and I was adamant that SARS-CoV-2 was a manmade agent, I suddenly realised what the potential motivation and persistence for recruiting me were.

"The intelligence community realised that I was the only person in a senior position that had left EHA, and the fact I was working outside the government's control made me a threat to their agenda."

Dr Huff believes government officials offered him the role so he could be "sworn into silence for the rest of my life".

As he began to unravel the alleged extensive cover-up by the US government, he said the authorities launched a massive campaign of harassment against him.

He claimed military-grade drones would often appear at his home, he was stalked at the supermarket, and he was followed by unknown vehicles.

Dr Huff has since filed a lawsuit with Renz Law LLC against EcoHealth Alliance in the state of New York.

The National Institutes of Health previously stated in a letter to Congress the bat viruses EcoHealth Alliance were studying in Wuhan could not have become the virus that causes Covid.

What is Captagon, the highly addictive drug sweeping the Middle East?

Source: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/captagon-crisis/2021/10/25/what-is-captagon-the-drug-sweeping-the-middle-east/>

Dec 04 – The drug known as Captagon is the most in-demand narcotic in the Middle East.

Millions of pills are being intercepted by customs officials in the Gulf every month as the region continues to crack down on trafficking. But what is Captagon, who is consuming it and what effects does it have on users?

What is Captagon?

Captagon was first created in 1961 as an alternative to amphetamine and methamphetamine and was used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and, less commonly, depression.

The drug, however, was never given regulatory approval by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and in 1981 it was declared a controlled substance after the medical community determined that the drug's addictive properties outweighed its clinical benefits.

By 1986 manufacturing Captagon had been outlawed in almost every country, but illegal production of the drug continued.

Criminal gangs from Bulgaria and Turkey are believed to have helped to introduce Captagon to the Middle East, where production has flourished in territory beyond the control of fragile states such as Syria and Lebanon.

Today, most of the pills being sold as Captagon across the region have little in common with the tablets produced in the 1960s.

Although stamped with the Captagon logo, these counterfeit pills – often white or yellowish brown in colour – are much less likely to contain fenethylline, the chemical first used in the original tablets.

They are instead more often made up of a mix of other amphetamine derivatives that are easier to produce, as well as additives such as caffeine, quinine and paracetamol.



Who is taking it?

Captagon quickly became associated with the civil war in Syria, after reports emerged of fighters on both sides using the drug on the battlefield. Talk of ISIS fighters being imbued with supernatural powers after

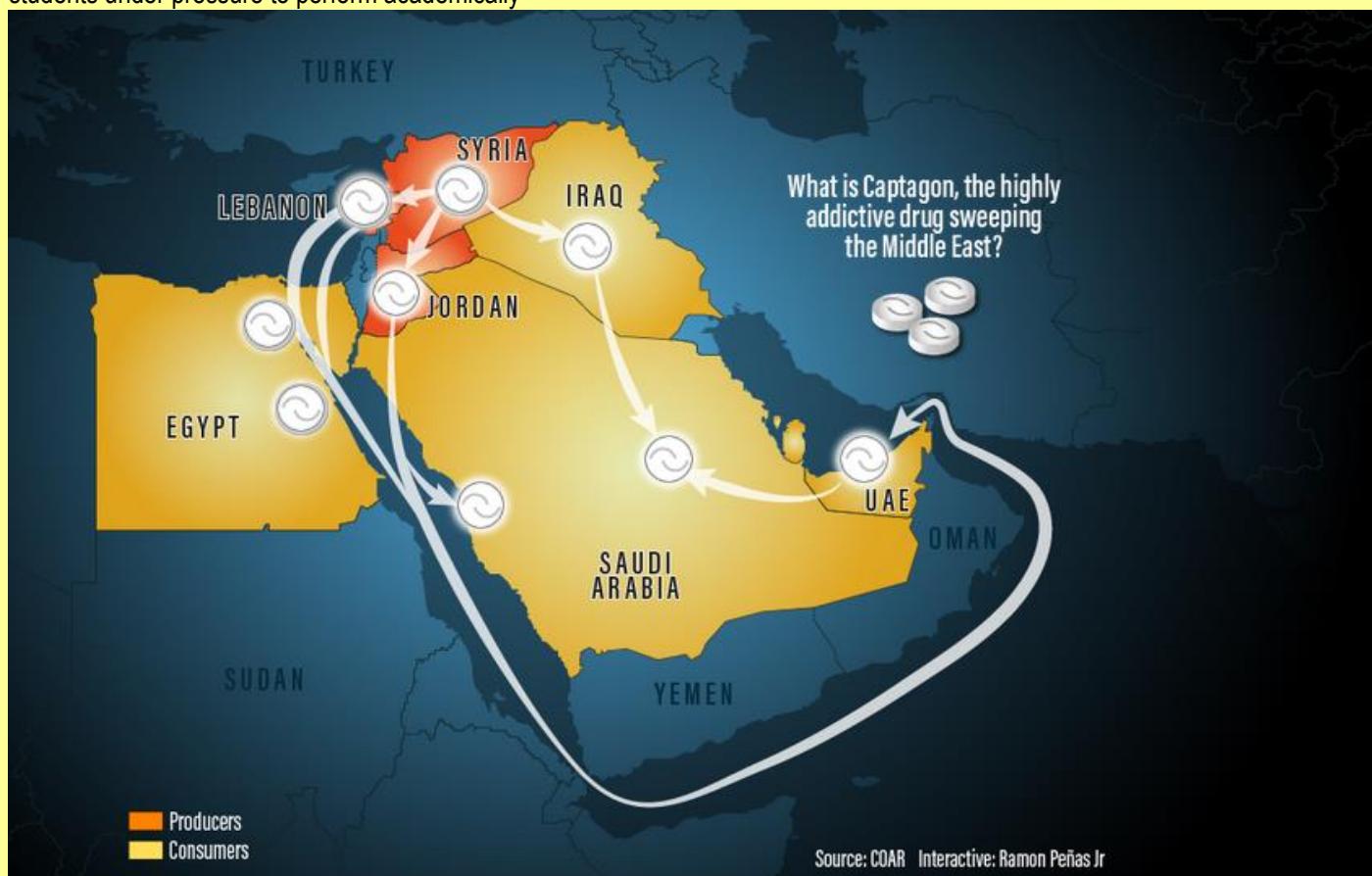




ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

dosing up on handfuls of pills were fanned by producers and the fighters themselves, but have largely been discredited by experts. Analysts often questioned the drug's influence on the conflict, pointing instead to the Captagon trade being a lucrative revenue stream for the different warring sides in Syria. The main markets for Captagon are in the Gulf, where it is popular as a recreational drug with young people, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

Data on how widespread the use of Captagon is in Saudi Arabia is scarce, but it is known to be popular as a party drug and among students under pressure to perform academically.



In 2015, the secretary general of Saudi Arabia's National Committee for Narcotics Control said that the majority of the kingdom's drug addicts were between 12 and 22 years old, with as many as 40 per cent of those addicted to Captagon being in that age group.

What effects does it have on users?

Captagon is a highly addictive **amphetamine**. It works by stimulating the central nervous system, increasing alertness and concentration and allowing users to stay awake. It has been compared with drugs such as Adderall, another amphetamine used to treat ADHD in children. Despite the descriptions of extremist fighters in Syria feeling invincible while on the drug, the effects of Captagon are generally mild, with users reporting feeling mild euphoria, as well as being talkative and more energetic.

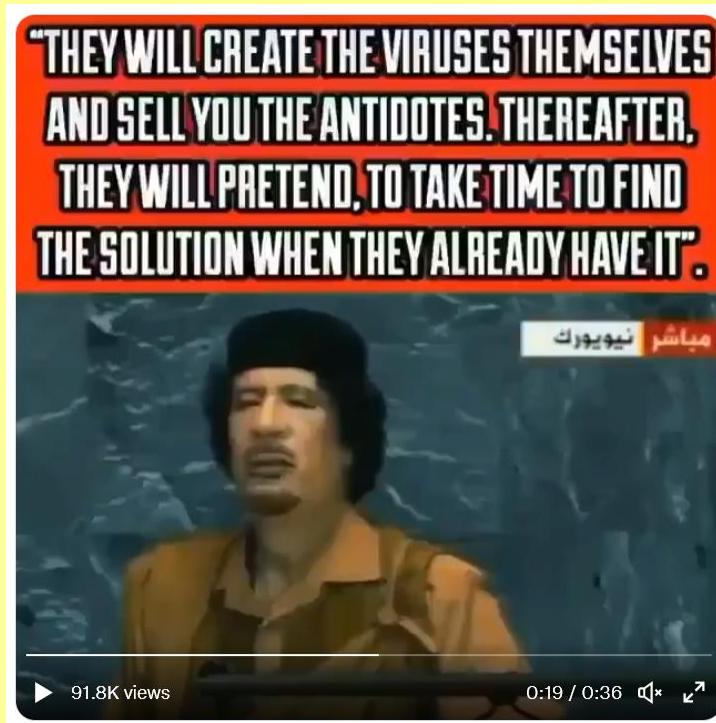
But Captagon abuse can have devastating consequences for those who become addicted.

Long-term amphetamine users can suffer from a range of side effects including confusion, hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, seizures, high blood pressure and heart palpitations, according to The Cabin, an addiction services group that operates in Saudi Arabia.

Other side effects reported by regular users include blurred vision, vertigo, breathing difficulties, heart palpitations, gastrointestinal symptoms, muscle and joint pain, mood swings, confusion, feelings of anger and irritability. When users try to quit taking Captagon pills, they often encounter strong withdrawal symptoms, including fatigue, that cause them to seek out the drug again. Treatment for Captagon addiction usually includes psychotherapy, as well as exercise and diet programmes.

●► Explore: [The captagon crisis](#)





UN General Assembly Sept 2009

"Today there is swine flu. Maybe tomorrow there will be a fish flu. This is because sometimes we create viruses and epidemics to deal with them afterwards.

This is a business.

Capitalist corporations create viruses to then manufacture and sell and profit from vaccines. This is a shame.

Vaccines and medicines should not be sold. They must be distributed freely"

Muammar Gaddafi

Omicron's Origins: How the SARS-CoV-2 Variant Emerged in Africa

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/virology/coronavirus/omicrons-origins-how-the-sars-cov-2-variant-emerged-in-africa/>

Dec 05 – This time last year, a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 started making headlines. First discovered a year ago in South Africa, the omicron variant spread across the globe at incredible speed. It has been unclear exactly how, when, and where this virus originated. Now, a new collaboration between researchers in Germany and a network of African institutions shows that Omicron's predecessors existed on the African continent long before cases were first identified. Their findings suggest that Omicron emerged gradually over several months in different countries across Africa.

The work is published in *Science*, in the paper, "[Gradual emergence followed by exponential spread of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant in Africa.](#)"

The biggest leap seen in the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 to date was observed by researchers a year ago, when a variant was discovered that differed from the genome of the original virus by more than 50 mutations. First detected in a patient in South Africa in mid-November 2021, Omicron BA.1 spread to 87 countries around the world within just a few weeks. By the end of December, it had replaced the previously dominant Delta variant worldwide.

Now, an international research team led by Jan Felix Drexler, MD, group leader at the Institute of Virology at Charité and the German Center for Infection Research (DZIF) developed a PCR test to detect the Omicron variant BA.1. They then tested 13,097 respiratory samples from COVID-19 patients that had been taken in 22 African countries between mid-2021 and early 2022.

In doing so, the research team found viruses with Omicron-specific mutations in 25 people from six different countries who contracted COVID-19 in August and September 2021—two months before the variant was first detected in South Africa.

They then sequenced the viral genome of 670 samples. In doing so, the team discovered several viruses that showed varying degrees of similarity to Omicron, but they were not identical. "Our data show that Omicron had different ancestors that interacted with each other and circulated in Africa, sometimes concurrently, for months," explained Drexler. "This suggests that the BA.1 Omicron variant evolved gradually, during which time the virus increasingly adapted to existing human immunity."

In addition, the data led the researchers to conclude that although Omicron did not originate solely in South Africa, it first dominated infection rates there before spreading from south to north across the African continent within only a few weeks.

"This means Omicron's sudden rise cannot be attributed to a jump from the animal kingdom or the emergence in a single immunocompromised person, although these two scenarios may have also played a role in the evolution of the virus," said Drexler. "The fact that Omicron caught us by surprise is instead due to the diagnostic blind spot that exists in large parts of Africa, where presumably only a small fraction





of SARS-CoV-2 infections are even recorded. Omicron's gradual evolution was therefore simply overlooked. So it is important that we now significantly strengthen diagnostic surveillance systems on the African continent and in comparable regions of the Global South, while also facilitating global data sharing. Only good data can prevent policymakers from implementing potentially effective containment measures, such as travel restrictions, at the wrong time, which can end up causing more economic and social harm than good."

FDA Pulls US Authorization for Eli Lilly's COVID Drug Bebtelovimab

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/984823>



Dec 01 – Eli Lilly and Co's COVID-19 drug bebtelovimab is not currently authorized for emergency use in the United States, the Food and Drug Administration said, citing it is not expected to neutralize the dominant BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 subvariants of Omicron.

Wednesday's announcement takes away authorization from the last COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment, leaving Pfizer Inc's antiviral drug Paxlovid, Merck's Lagevrio and Gilead Sciences' Veklury as treatments for the disease, besides convalescent plasma for some patients.

AstraZeneca Plc's monoclonal antibody Evusheld is also authorized for protection against COVID-19 infection in some people. Eli Lilly and its authorized distributors have paused commercial distribution of the monoclonal antibody until further notice from the agency, while the U.S. government has also paused fulfillment of any pending requests under its scheme to help uninsured and underinsured Americans access the drug.

The drug, which was discovered by Abcellera and commercialized by Eli Lilly, received an authorization from the FDA in February. BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 have become the dominant strains in the United States after a steady increase in prevalence over the last two months, surpassing Omicron's BA.5 sub-variant, which had driven cases earlier in the year.

The subvariants accounted for around 57% of the cases nationally, as per government data last week.

Biodefense and emergency use authorization: different originations, purposes, and evolutionary paths of institutions in the United States and South Korea

By HyunJung Kim

Globalization and Health | Volume 18, Article number: 100 (2022)

Source: <https://globalizationandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12992-022-00895-5>

Abstract

Emergency-use-authorization (EUA) is the representative biodefense policy that allows the use of unlicensed medical countermeasures or off-label use of approved medical countermeasures in response to public health emergencies. This article aims to determine why the EUA policies of the United States and South Korea produced drastically different outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how these outcomes were determined by the originations and evolutionary paths of the two policies.

Method

Historical institutionalism (HI) explains institutional changes—that is, how the institution is born and how it evolves—based on the concept of path dependency. However, the HI analytical narratives remain at the meso level of analysis in the context of structure and agency. This article discusses domestic and policy-level factors related to the origination of the biodefense institutions in the United States and South Korea using policy-learning concepts with the Event-related Policy Change Model.

Results

The 2001 anthrax letter attack (Amerithrax) and the 2015 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak prompted the establishment of biodefense institutions in the United States and South Korea, respectively. Due to the different departure points and the mechanism of path dependency, the two countries' EUAs evolved in different ways—the United States EUA reinforced the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) function, while the South Korea EUA strengthened the Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) function.

Conclusions

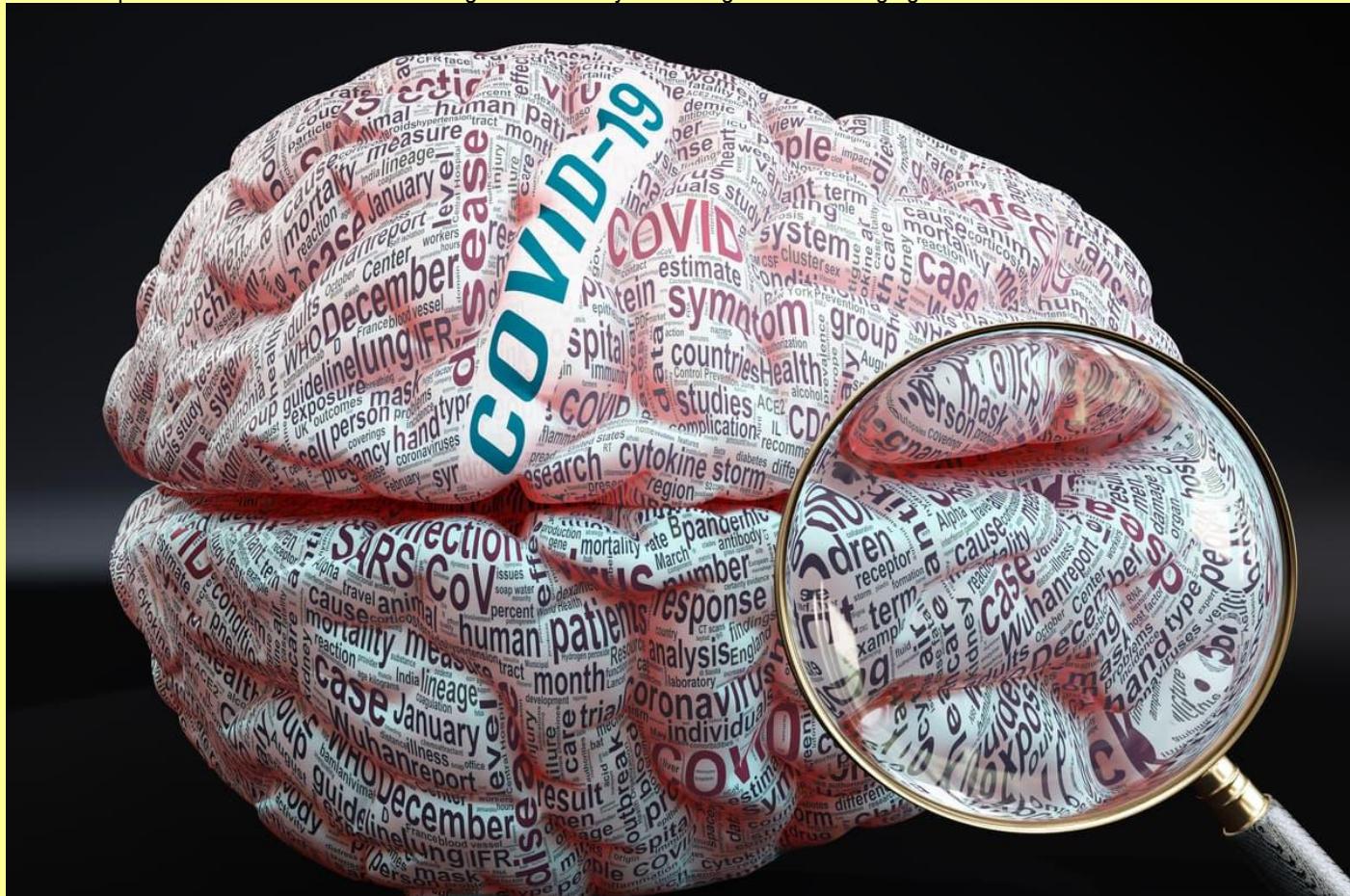
The evolution and outcomes of the two EUAs are different because both policies were born out of different needs. The United States EUA is primarily oriented toward protecting homeland security against CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) threats, whereas the South Korea EUA is specifically designed for disease prevention against infectious disease outbreak.





Harvard study links severe COVID with genetic signs of brain aging

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/harvard-study-covid19-genetic-brain-aging-dementia/>



Dec 05 – A study looking at post-mortem brain tissue samples has found severe COVID-19 is associated with molecular signs of brain aging. The study identified gene expression changes in the brains of deceased COVID patients that resemble what is seen in old age, and the researchers warn potential long-term neurological problems could emerge in the years following the pandemic. As we come up to the three-year anniversary of the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 scientists are still trying to understand the long-term impacts of this novel coronavirus on the human body. For many people a bout with COVID-19 can present as a mild, flu-like respiratory illness, however, it has become increasingly clear this virus can broadly affect the entire body, from [damaging heart tissue](#) to [increasing one's diabetes risk](#).

The impact of SARS-CoV-2 on the brain has perhaps been one of the most concerning areas of research over the past couple of years. COVID has long been associated with neurological symptoms [such as brain fog](#) or [losing one's sense of smell](#), so it has been clear since 2020 that the disease impacts the brain. But exactly [how it affects the brain hasn't been clear](#).

Earlier this year a study, dubbed "[one of the most important](#)" of the pandemic to date, identified long-term brain changes in hundreds of recovered COVID patients. The study offered one of the first longitudinal imaging analyses of brain changes associated with SARS-CoV-2 infections.

Not long after that study was published another investigation appeared looking at the [long-term cognitive impacts of severe COVID-19](#). That research, led by scientists from Imperial College London and the University of Cambridge, estimated a severe case of COVID was cognitively equivalent to about 20 years of brain aging.

A barrage of cognitive assessments in COVID patients six months after being discharged from hospital revealed survivors were slower to respond to tasks and less accurate in their responses, compared to their matched controls. Essentially, a 50 year old hospitalized with severe COVID showed cognitive test scores similar to what would be seen in a healthy 70 year old.

Maria Mavrikaki, a Harvard Medical School researcher, had been following the emerging studies linking COVID to persistent cognitive problems since the beginning of the pandemic and set out to investigate





what specifically could be causing these brain problems. Along with several colleagues, Mavrikaki analyzed more than 50 brain tissue samples, including 21 samples from individuals who died from severe COVID.

The research focused on a type of genetic sequencing called whole-transcriptome analysis. This analysis presents a snapshot of gene activity in a particular cell, allowing for insights into what specific genes were switched on or off in a person at their time of death.

Compared to similar brain tissue samples from age- and sex-matched controls, the researchers identified nearly 7,000 differentially expressed genes in the COVID cohort. Unsurprisingly, gene activity relating to immune pathways was up-regulated, but perhaps more concerning was the amount of down-regulated genes linked to synaptic activity, cognition and memory pathways.

"We also observed significant associations of cellular response to DNA damage, mitochondrial function, regulation of response to stress and oxidative stress, vesicular transport, calcium homeostasis, and insulin signaling/secretion pathways previously associated with aging processes and brain aging," the researchers write in the new study. "Altogether, our analyses suggest that many biological pathways that change with natural aging in the brain also change in severe COVID-19."

The research also examined the mechanisms that could be triggering these specific age-related gene expression changes. So far, the debate over the effects of COVID on the brain has offered up two distinct hypotheses. One school of thought argues [SARS-CoV-2 can directly infiltrate the brain](#), while the other argument suggests the neurological symptoms of COVID are due to [systemic inflammatory effects](#) brought on by the disease.

Investigating both hypotheses, the new research could not detect any SARS-CoV-2 viral RNA in the brain tissue samples. Instead, the study did identify the up-regulation of several inflammatory pathways (tumor necrosis factor, aka TNF, and type I/II interferons), which have previously been implicated in brain aging. Further investigations by the researchers confirmed these specific immune cells can directly influence the expression of several aging-related genes.

"We also found that cytokines upregulated the expression of aging-regulated genes that were upregulated in individuals with COVID-19 such as *TRIM22*, *CHI3L1*, *C1S* and *IFITM1* and downregulated the expression of aging-regulated genes that were downregulated in individuals with COVID-19 such as *CCND2*, *ACTR3B* and *EPHA5*," the researchers stated in the study. "Taken together, our data suggest that COVID-19-induced TNF and type I/II interferons may lead to significant deteriorating effects in the brain in the absence of SARS-CoV-2 neuroinvasion."

So what does all this mean?

Commenting on the new study to [Nature](#), neuropathologist Marianna Bugiani said it's hard to predict the long-term effects of COVID on the brain, pointing out it's too soon to tell whether these brain changes are permanent, or what their consequences could be on a person's risk of neurodegenerative disease. And we don't know to what degree these kinds of gene-expression changes affect the brains of those experiencing mild bouts of COVID.

"It opens a plethora of questions that are important, not only for understanding the disease, but to prepare society for what the consequences of the pandemic might be," said Bugiani, who didn't work on this new study. "And these consequences might not be clear for years."

Back in 2020, soon after SARS-CoV-2 emerged, a team of researchers at Australia's Florey Institute of Neuroscience & Mental Health [warned rates of Parkinson's disease could increase](#) in the years following the pandemic. Understanding how virus-induced neuroinflammation can increase a person's risk of neurological disease, the Florey researchers pointed to the fallout from the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic as an example of what may come in the wake of this COVID pandemic.

Five years after the Spanish Flu pandemic ended, global Parkinson's disease diagnoses had almost tripled. And so far, three years into the COVID pandemic, preliminary studies are already detecting mild increases in rates of [Alzheimer's](#), [Parkinson's](#) and [dementia](#). Mavrikaki and colleagues are cautious not to jump to any explicit conclusions in their latest study. They note these findings are just a small piece in the larger puzzle of COVID's long-term effects, but they also stress their findings seem to be directly related to SARS-CoV-2, and are not simply a relic of a patient being seriously ill.

One particularly novel analysis in the study compares the gene expression data from COVID patients to brain tissue samples from patients who were severely ill in intensive care and/or placed on a ventilator but were not infected with COVID. That analysis confirmed that the brain aging identified in the COVID patients was unique to the illness and not just due to the trauma of severe hospitalization.

The researchers ultimately recommend doctors be aware that COVID could be considered a risk factor for dementia in the future, particularly in patients with pre-existing susceptibilities.

"The generalizability of our results to individuals who had mild COVID-19 or who recovered from COVID-19 remains to be determined," the researchers conclude. "Given our findings, we advocate for neurological follow-up of individuals who recovered from COVID-19 and suggest potential clinical value in modifying





risk factors to reduce the risk or delay the development of aging-related neurological pathologies and cognitive decline."

●► The new study was published in the journal [Nature Aging](#).

Study Comparing Surgical and N95 Masks Sparks Concern

By Kate Johnson

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/984992>

Dec 05 – A randomized trial indicating that surgical masks are not inferior to N95 masks in protecting healthcare workers against COVID-19 has sparked international criticism.

The study's senior author is John Conly, MD, an infectious disease specialist and professor at the Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and Alberta Health Services. The findings are not consistent with those of many other studies on this topic.

Commenting about Conly's study on Twitter, Eric Topol, MD, editor-in-chief of *Medscape*, wrote, "It's woefully underpowered but ruled out a doubling of hazard for use of medical masks."

The study, which was partially funded by the World Health Organization (WHO), [was published](#) online November 29 in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

This is not the first time that Conly, who also advises the WHO, has been the subject of controversy. He previously denied that COVID-19 is airborne — a position that is contradicted by strong evidence. Last year, Conly [made headlines](#) with his controversial claim that N95 respirators can cause harms, including oxygen depletion and carbon dioxide retention.

A [detailed examination](#) by the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, pointed out numerous scientific flaws in the study, including inconsistent use of both types of masks. The study also examined healthcare workers in four very different countries (Canada, Israel, Egypt, and Pakistan) during different periods of the pandemic, which may have affected the results. Furthermore, the study did not account for vaccination status and lacked a control group. CIDRAP receives funding from 3M, which makes N95 respirators.

In a [commentary](#) published alongside the study, Roger Chou, MD, professor of medicine at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, said that the results were "not definitive," with "a generous noninferiority threshold" that is actually "consistent with up to a relative 70% increased risk ... which may be unacceptable to many health workers."

Lead study author Mark Loeb, MD, professor of infectious diseases at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, defended the findings. "The confidence intervals around this, that is, what the possible results could be if the trial was repeated many times, range from -2.5% to 4.9%," he told *Medscape*. "This means that the risk of a COVID-19 infection in those using the medical masks could have ranged from anywhere from 2.5% reduction in risk to a 4.9% increase in risk. Readers and policy makers can decide for themselves about this."

"There is no point continuing to run underpowered, poorly designed studies that are designed to confirm existing biases," Raina MacIntyre, PhD, professor of global biosecurity and head of the Biosecurity Program at the Kirby Institute, in Sydney, Australia, told *Medscape*. "The new study in *Annals of Internal Medicine* is entirely consistent with our finding that to prevent infection, you need an N95, and it needs to be worn throughout the whole shift. A surgical mask and intermittent use of N95 are equally ineffective. This should not surprise anyone, given a surgical mask is not designed as respiratory protection but is designed to prevent splash or spray of liquid on the face. Only a respirator is designed as respiratory protection through both the seal around the face and the filter of the face piece to prevent inhalation of virus laden aerosols, but you need to wear it continually in a high-risk environment like a hospital."

"It makes zero sense to do a randomized trial on something you can measure directly," Kimberly Prather, PhD, an atmospheric chemist, professor, and director of the NSF Center for Aerosol Impacts on Chemistry of the Environment at the University of California, San Diego, told *Medscape*. "In fact, many studies have shown aerosols leaking out of surgical masks. Surgical masks are designed to block large spray droplets. Aerosols (0.5 to 3 µm), which have been shown to contain infectious SARS-CoV-2 virus, travel with the air flow, and escape."

"This study ... will be used to justify policies of supplying healthcare workers, and perhaps patients and visitors, too, with inadequate protection," Trish Greenhalgh, MD, professor of primary care health sciences at the University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom, told *Medscape*.

"These authors have been pushing back against treating COVID as airborne for 3 years," David Fisman, MD, an epidemiologist and infectious disease specialist at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School



of Public Health, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, told *Medscape*. "So, you'll see these folks brandishing this very flawed trial to justify continuing the infection control practices that have been so disastrous throughout the pandemic."

*The study was funded by the World Health Organization, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the Juravinski Research Institute. Chou reported receiving grants from the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, Pfizer, and the WHO. Chou was a coauthor with one of the authors of the Loeb study on a similar subject. He also disclosed being a methodologist for WHO guidelines on infection prevention and control measures for COVID-19. Loeb disclosed payment for expert testimony on personal protective equipment from the government of Manitoba and the Peel District School Board. MacIntyre has led a large body of research on masks and respirators in health workers, including four randomized clinical trials. She is the author of a book, *Dark Winter* (NewSouth, 2022), which covers the history and politics of the controversies around N95 and masks. Prather reported no disclosures. Greenhalgh is a member of Independent [SAGE](#) and an unpaid adviser to the philanthropic fund Balvi. Fisman has served as a paid legal expert for the Ontario Nurses' Association in their challenge to Directive 5, which restricted access to N95 masks in healthcare. He also served as a paid legal expert for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario in its efforts to make schools safer in Ontario.*

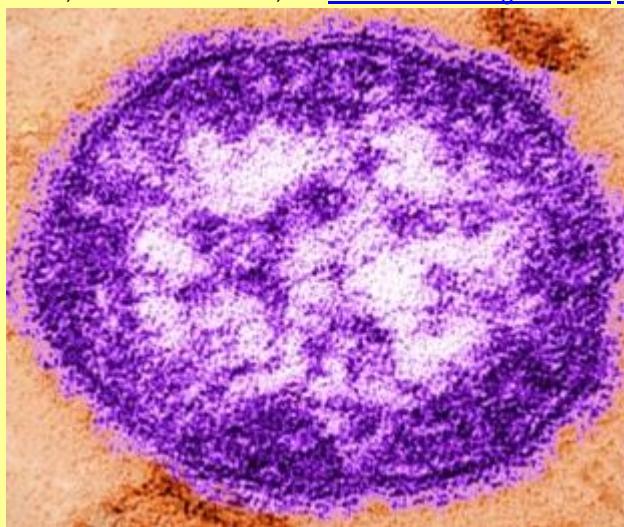
Kate Johnson is a Montreal-based freelance medical journalist who has been writing for more than 30 years about all areas of medicine.

Ancient Pathogen Is 'Imminent Threat' in Every Part of The World, WHO Warns

By Michael Head

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/ancient-pathogen-is-imminent-threat-in-every-part-of-the-world-who-warns>

Dec 07 – One consequence of the [pandemic](#) was [reduced access](#) to routine healthcare and lower uptake of immunisations. As a result, in November 2022, the [World Health Organization declared](#) measles to be an "imminent threat in every region of the world".



They described how a record number of nearly 40 million children had missed at least one measles vaccine dose in 2021.

Measles is a viral respiratory illness. [Transmission](#) is similar to COVID, with the spread between people being driven by respiratory droplets and aerosols (airborne transmission). The infection produces a rash and [fever](#) in mild cases.

Digitally colorized microscopic image of a measles virus particle. (CDC/Cynthia S. Goldsmith/William Bellini, Ph.D.)

But [severe cases](#) can include encephalitis (brain swelling), blindness, and [pneumonia](#). There are approximately [9 million cases a year and 128,000 deaths](#).

The measles vaccine, which can be administered by itself or in combination with other vaccinations such as mumps and rubella to make up the MMR immunisation, is very effective.

Most countries have a two-dose schedule, with the first jab usually given at 12 months of age, and the second dose when the child is four years old.

The vaccine provides very high and long-lasting protection, and really is a model example of the term "vaccine-preventable disease". The two-dose schedule [gives](#) about 99 percent protection against measles infection.

In developing countries where vaccine uptake is low, as many as [one in ten](#) who get measles, die from it. In developed countries, deaths are overwhelmingly in unvaccinated people at a [rate](#) of around one in 1,000 to 5,000 measles cases.

The potential for new outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in areas such as [conflict zones](#) and among [refugee populations](#) is high.

Problems such as [malnutrition](#) greatly raise the risks of severe illness, and respiratory infectious diseases are a [huge concern](#) for humanitarian groups supporting vulnerable groups such as Ukrainian refugees.





Measles is incredibly infectious. Its [basic reproduction number](#) (R0) – that is, how many people on average an infected person will go on to infect in a susceptible population – is [estimated](#) to be between 12 and 18. For comparison, the R0 of the omicron COVID variant is [thought to be](#) around 8.2.

The proportion of a population that needs to be vaccinated to keep outbreaks under control and to minimise onward transmission around a community is known as the herd immunity threshold (HIT).

For measles, vaccine [coverage](#) of 95 percent is typically considered to be the HIT magic number.

Most of the world is some way below that threshold, with [global coverage](#) of around 71 percent for two doses, and 81 percent for one dose coverage. In the UK, 2021-22 [data](#) shows that 89 percent of children had received one measles vaccine dose.

Globally, there has been significant progress in [reducing](#) deaths from all causes in children under the age of five. Annual deaths declined from 12.5 million in 1990 to 5.2 million in 2019. However, low vaccine coverage could reverse those gains.

Even if children survive measles, there is a possibility of long-term damage to their immune system, [described](#) as a "form of immune amnesia". In unvaccinated populations, a severe case of measles resulted in an average loss of 40 percent of [antibodies](#) that would normally recognise germs.

After a mild case of measles, unvaccinated children lost 33 percent of those antibodies. By comparison, measurements in healthy control populations indicated an [antibody](#) loss of 10 percent over similar or longer durations.

Misinformation is rife

Anti-vaccine advocacy has driven false rumours and scare stories, such as the [fake claims](#) by former physician and anti-vaccine activist Andrew Wakefield that the MMR vaccine causes [autism](#).

This belief persists. For example, a [US population survey](#) in 2020 found: "18 percent of our respondents mistakenly state that it is very or somewhat accurate to say that vaccines cause autism."

Misinformation since the start of the COVID pandemic has [been extensive](#). And there is a risk of this misinformation further translating into greater levels of hesitancy and vaccine refusal for [routine immunisation](#).

Measles spreads easily and is a severe infection in the short- and long-term in unvaccinated populations. There is a great need for immunisation campaigns to increasingly protect against vaccine-preventable diseases, across the globe.

The need is particularly urgent in developing countries and among other vulnerable populations such as refugees and areas of conflict.

[Michael Head](#) is a Senior Research Fellow in Global Health @ University of Southampton.

New COVID treatment found in old liver drug derived from bear bile

By Rich Hardiy

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/udca-covid-liver-drug-bear-bile/>

Dec 06 – An impressive new study published in *Nature* is pointing to a new kind of treatment to protect the vulnerable from COVID-19. The research revealed an old drug derived from bear bile and used for liver disease can block a crucial pathway used by SARS-CoV-2 to enter human cells.

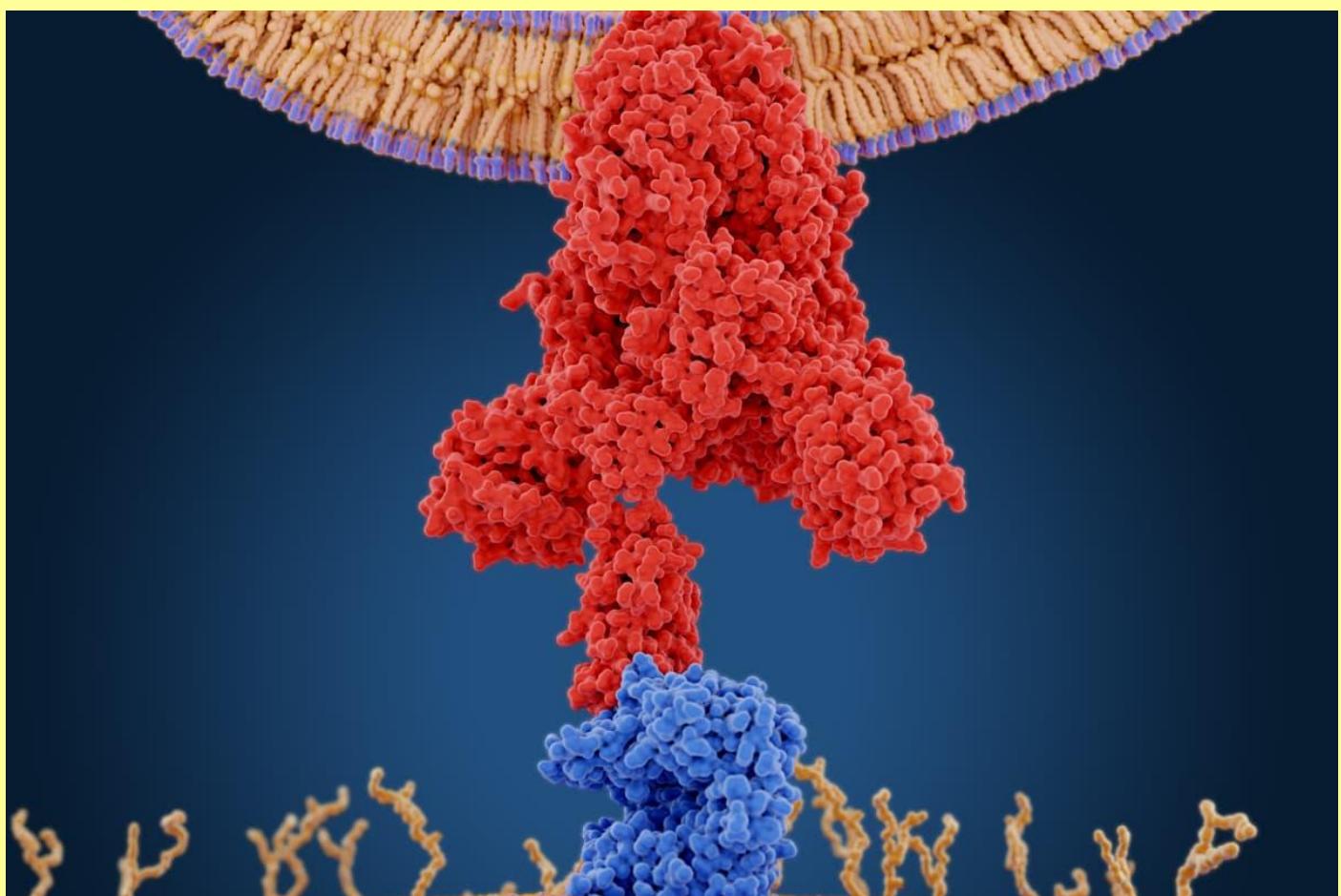
The research, a collaboration between scientists at the University of Cambridge and the Berlin Institute of Health at Charité, was aimed at developing novel prophylactic treatments for COVID-19. As co-author Fotios Sampaziotis explained, vaccines are a crucial tool but not the only way we can try to stop SARS-CoV-2 infections.

"... vaccines don't work for everyone – for example, patients with a weak immune system – and not everyone have access to them," said Sampaziotis. "We're interested in finding alternative ways to protect us from SARS-CoV-2 infection that are not dependent on the immune system and could complement vaccination."

The origins of the new study go back to the beginning of the pandemic. Early in 2020, researchers quickly homed in on the strategy SARS-CoV-2 employs to enter human cells. Much like its predecessor SARS, this novel coronavirus enters human cells through a doorway called ACE2.

ACE2 is an enzyme that can be found on the surface of cells across much of the human body. And the prolific nature of these ACE2 receptors is a key reason COVID-19 is much more than a simple respiratory disease. ACE2 receptors are particularly prominent in the gut and cardiovascular system, meaning SARS-CoV-2 can strike a variety of locations in the body beyond just the lungs.





The SARS-CoV-2 spike protein (in red) enters human cells via a receptor called ACE2 (in blue). A study discovered a pre-existing drug can reduce the volume of ACE2 receptors on our cells, hypothetically reducing opportunities for viral infection.

One curious finding, from the initial stages of the pandemic, was the dramatic variation in ACE2 levels between different kinds of bile tissue. These early observations suggested some kind of factor, potentially bile acids, seemed to be suppressing the expression of ACE2 in certain cells.

The first big breakthrough came when it was discovered a bile acid molecule dubbed FXR seemed to play a fundamental role in controlling the expression of ACE2. The next big discovery came with the identification of ursodeoxycholic acid (UDCA), a clinically approved liver disease drug, effectively suppressing FXR activity and subsequently lowering ACE2 levels on lab-grown cells.

The foundations for the research at this stage were strong, but the big question was whether UDCA treatment actually reduced volumes of ACE2 receptors in humans. In an article for [The Conversation](#), Sampaziotis and colleague Teresa Brevini detailed the next step in the compelling research.

"We recruited eight healthy volunteers, gave them UDCA, and then swabbed their noses," Brevini and Sampaziotis explain. "We observed a reduction of ACE2 in their nasal cells, the main point of entry for the virus into the body, suggesting SARS-CoV-2 would have fewer opportunities to infect these cells."

The final piece in the puzzle was an epidemiological survey of patients taking UDCA for liver disease. If the drug was at all helpful in reducing the impact of COVID then there should be signs of that in clinical data. And indeed those signs were there, with chronic liver disease patients taking UDCA showing lower rates of COVID hospitalization and death compared to matched control patients not receiving UDCA.

Andrew Owen, a University of Liverpool researcher working on the project, is cautious to stress the need for larger clinical trials before concluding UDCA can be effective against COVID.

"Although we will need properly-controlled randomized trials to confirm these findings, the data provide compelling evidence that UDCA could work as a drug to protect against COVID-19 and complement vaccination programs, particularly in vulnerable population groups," Owen said. "As it targets the ACE2



receptor directly, we hope it may be more resilient to changes resulting from the evolution of the SARS-CoV-2 spike, which result in the rapid emergence of new variants." This research is far from the first to consider targeting ACE2 as a way of preventing or treating COVID. [Several strategies are in various stages of research](#), from creating decoy ACE2-like molecules that attract SARS-CoV-2 to designing small molecules that bind with ACE2 receptors and block the virus from entering human cells.

What makes this new work particularly novel is its discovery of a common, cheap, pre-existing drug that seems to effectively target ACE2 receptor activity. Ursodeoxycholic acid was first identified in bile from bears. As a traditional medicine, the use of bear bile to treat a variety of ailments goes back hundreds of years. In the 1950s scientists developed effective ways to synthesize UDCA, the main therapeutic agent in bear bile, reducing the need for harmful bear bile farms. By the late 1980s the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) formally approved synthesized UDCA as a drug treatment for liver disease. Since then the drug has moved off-patent and is now accessible as a cheap generic medication. Sampaziotis is hopeful further clinical testing for UDCA is effective as the drug is known to be safe, well-tolerated and could be easily administered as a prophylactic to patients vulnerable to COVID-19. UDCA may not be the most optimized ACE2-targeting COVID treatment but it could be a valuable stop-gap as we wait for more effective drugs to be developed in the future. "This tablet costs little, can be produced in large quantities fast and easily stored or shipped, which makes it easy to rapidly deploy during outbreaks – especially against vaccine-resistant variants, when it might be the only line of protection while waiting for new vaccines to be developed," Sampaziotis added. "We are optimistic that this drug could become an important weapon in our fight against COVID-19."

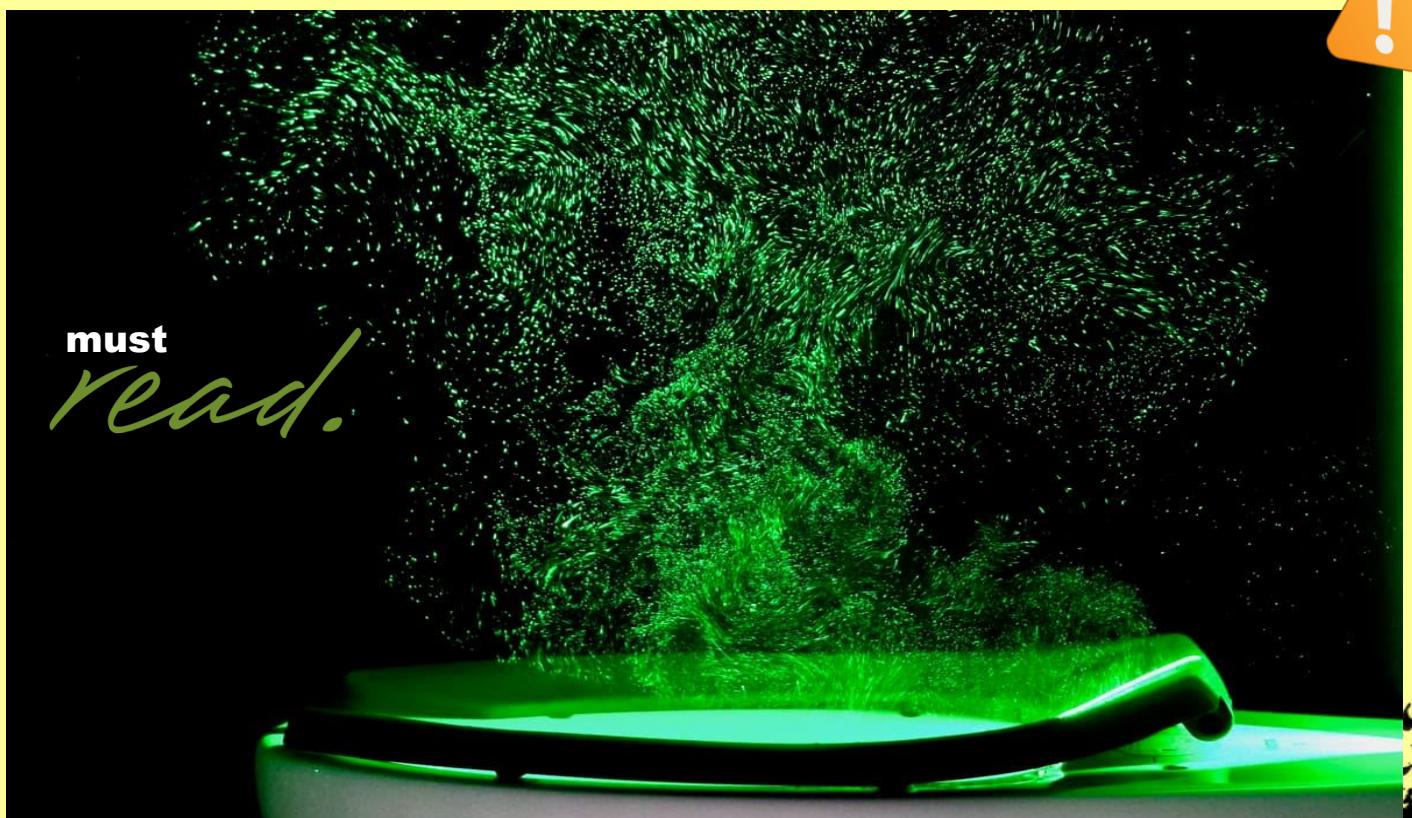
► The new study was published in [Nature](#).

Coronaviruses Use ACE2 Receptor in Bats, Similar to SARS-CoV-2

The understanding of the receptors that viruses use to enter cells is a key component to understanding the emergence of zoonotic diseases in humans. Now, new research shows that two close bat virus relatives of the MERS coronavirus (NeoCoV and PDF-2180) can efficiently bind to (and use) specific bat ACE2 orthologs and human ACE2 as entry receptors through the receptor-binding domains on their spike proteins. [+ MORE](#)

Pandemic – Put the lid down

Source: <https://newatlas.com/science/visualization-toilet-plumes/>





Raina MacIntyre – Dark Winter: An insider's guide to pandemics and biosecurity

Source: <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/culture/books/2022/12/31/dark-winter-insiders-guide-pandemics-and-biosecurity#mtr>

The epidemiologist Raina MacIntyre is one of the world's foremost experts on biosecurity and bioterrorism. In 2006 she warned that the Australian health system was vastly unprepared for a pandemic. Nothing changed. Our governments remained "asleep at the wheel". When Covid-19 arrived, the official response was so "politicised" that data was ignored

and "the health of the public devalued". In *Dark Winter*, she delivers another stark warning: future pandemics, especially those that might escape or be purposefully released from a lab, as in biowarfare and bioterrorism, threaten human extinction as much as climate change.

With a proliferation of unregulated DIY laboratories for biological experimentation, the dangers of a weaponised pandemic or targeted attacks with manipulated pathogens are increasing all the time. She cites many cases of biodisasters and near-disasters from around the globe. By the time you finish reading, you may not want to leave the house – or, if you are a "high-value" individual, touch the doorknobs inside it.

Because "public health surveillance is the key to controlling disease", MacIntyre built the open-source and AI-driven epidemic observatory EPIWATCH at UNSW Sydney. It monitors news and social media in more than 40 languages for early warning signs of epidemic outbreaks and conducts rapid risk analysis. Yet few policymakers appear to be paying attention. The reason why is almost as frightening as the biosecurity threats themselves. It is the "recurrent failures" of "the usual passengers on the biosecurity gravy train" – especially in the scientific and medical communities – to rethink mistaken assumptions or challenge systems from which they benefit. Chief among the mistaken assumptions, MacIntyre argues, is that biosecurity incidents are

more likely to originate from natural sources than from the laboratory.

This leads to my two quibbles with what is otherwise a powerful, important and essential work. One is with MacIntyre's frequent, disparaging use of the word "expert" to describe foot-dragging professionals or others more concerned with avoiding panic than acknowledging uncomfortable realities. An echo of how the word is used by the "I-do-my-own-research" conspiracy crowd, it is potentially self-defeating, as it is MacIntyre's own extraordinary expertise that makes her arguments so compelling. The second is with her sympathetic reference to Sharri Markson's complaint in *What Really Happened in Wuhan* that political "tribalism" has hamstrung the response to Covid-19, given that book itself is so politically tribal that it undermines its own reasonable points. The enemy of my enemy isn't always my friend.

Neither criticism detracts from the vital importance of MacIntyre's message. To avoid a "biological winter", we need a co-ordinated, cross-disciplinary and global approach to biosecurity – and we need it now.

Psychotropic Medications May Protect Against COVID-19 Infection and Death

By Vinrod Rane, BS Pharm | 09 December 2022

Source: <https://www.medscape.co.uk/viewarticle/psychotropic-medications-may-protect-against-covid-19-2022a100280k>

Takeaway

- The use of psychotropic medications was significantly associated with a lower risk of confirmed severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection and COVID-19-related deaths.
- However, the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection was significantly lower in patients treated with diazepam.
- Patients treated with sertraline had a significantly lower risk of COVID-19-related deaths.

Why This Matters

- Findings emphasise the protective effects of psychotropic medications on the risk of COVID-19, especially among older populations.



Study Design

- This retrospective cohort study included 168,173 participants who were tested for SARS-CoV-2 ribonucleic acid from 2020 to 2021, identified from the UK Biobank (2006-2010).
- Primary outcome: the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- Secondary outcome: the risk of COVID-19-related death.
- Funding: National Natural Science Foundation of China.

Key Results

- Of 168,173 participants, 14,284 (8.5%) were taking psychotropic medications and 153,889 (91.5%) were not.
- Overall, 30,577 participants tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, of whom 1181 (3.9%) died from COVID-19 and 2542 (8.3%) were taking psychotropic medications.
- The risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection significantly reduced with the use of (adjusted OR [aOR]; 95% CI):
 - psychotropic medications (0.95; 0.88 to 0.98); and
 - diazepam (0.69; 0.53 to 0.88).
- Similarly, the risk of COVID-19-related deaths significantly reduced with the use of (aOR; 95% CI):
 - psychotropic medications (0.78; 0.64 to 0.98); and
 - sertraline (0.11; 0.02 to 0.39).

Reference: Ma Y, Li S, Yang H, Zhang Y, Li H, Xu F, Hou Y, Zhang X, Wang Y. Effect of psychotropics on the risk of COVID-19 in middle-aged and older adults. Eur Neuropsychopharmacol. 2022 Nov 23 [Epub ahead of print]. doi: 10.1016/j.euroneuro.2022.11.009. PMID: 36463771. [View Full-text](#)

COVID-19 Vaccines Should Be Labeled Gene Therapy

By Jan Jekielek

Source: https://www.theepochtimes.com/covid-19-vaccines-should-be-labeled-gene-therapy-scientific-consultant-dr-tess-lawrie_4909397.html



Dec 07 – Dr. Tess Lawrie, director of Evidence-Based Medicine Consultancy Ltd. and co-founder of the [World Council for Health](#), argues that the COVID-19 vaccines are not actually vaccines, but instead gene therapies that have dangerous and unknown long-term consequences and that they should be ended immediately.

With these genetic mRNA vaccines, “the theory is that your body then makes antibodies to the spike protein, but the antibodies are in your cells, so your body makes antibodies to your own cells that are containing the spike protein,” Lawrie said during a Dec. 6 interview for EpochTV’s [“American Thought Leaders” program](#).

A traditional vaccine contains a protein or antigen which is injected into the patient’s muscle, causing the body to respond to it with antibodies and T-cells, which then give the person immunity, she said.

“A gene is like a recipe, and in the body, it uses the body’s materials and mechanisms to make the product,” she said.

In genetic vaccines, the gene quickly circulates throughout the bloodstream, signaling each cell in the body to [make spike protein](#), said Lawrie.

“You may be making much more than you would make with getting COVID,” and doctors don’t know how long the body will keep doing this, she said.

Lawrie argues that if the vaccines were labeled gene therapy drugs and not vaccines, they would be required, like all other drugs, to go through pharmacokinetic studies.

Because these injections were labeled vaccines, they “slipped through in the regulatory process, because most drugs require pharmacokinetic studies, and the pharmacokinetic studies for vaccines include immunological studies.”

Pharmacokinetics is the study of how a drug behaves in a patient’s body, how it distributes, and how long it takes to be cleared from the body.





Not Safe for Any Age

In January 2021, Lawrie started monitoring the World Health Organization's (WHO) COVID-19 database for the effects of ivermectin, soon after she'd also started monitoring the genetic vaccines. Her organization found there were two broad categories of harm caused by these injections: neurological disease and immune system disease.

Lawrie said the Florida Surgeon General's vaccine guidance [against COVID-19 vaccinations for men ages 18 to 39](#) does not go far enough to protect people because the COVID vaccines have been shown to harm people of all age groups.

"It's really not enough to say that the vaccines are safe for one group and not another. They are not safe, fundamentally, in the essence, in the way they are designed," said Lawrie.

Because the drug companies and regulatory agencies are not analyzing the vaccine safety data to understand the long-term harms of the vaccines, independent scientists are left to determine what harms are being caused by the injections and how to treat those with vaccine injuries, and to educate the public about the risk-benefit ratio of the vaccines, she said.

"The pharmaceutical companies should be proving that their product is safe," but they are not, said Lawrie.

Although [myocarditis](#) is acknowledged as vaccine harm, it is only one of the symptoms of a much larger problem.

"The broader picture is that most of the [myocarditis is inflammation](#), and that inflammation is happening in every organ and tissue of the body," she said.

"Because the immune system is so busy fighting this foreign spike protein, you also have a lot of latent infections—herpes, Epstein Barr, shingles—popping up, because the immune system's suppressed, not boosted," Lawrie continued.

"They don't work. The benefit is not there, and the risks are tremendous and are being revealed every day," she said of the COVID vaccines.

The important thing now is to focus on alerting the public to not take any more boosters, helping the vaccine injured, and analyzing all the safety data, she said.

Lawrie said the COVID vaccines [negatively impact women's](#) reproductive health, and she cautions pregnant women in particular to stay away from the genetic vaccines because the long-term harms are unknown. Some data suggest higher rates of miscarriage and fetal death after being vaccinated.

Pandemic Revealed Broader Agenda

Over the course of the pandemic, the globalist agenda to centralize power became more obvious to Lawrie. She said she noticed Big Pharma's influence on publishing pro-vaccine studies and anti-repurposed drug studies in medical journals. She also observed the World Economic Forum (WEF) pushing for technology to monitor citizens, and the corruption of the WHO by the Chinese Communist Party and wealthy donors like Bill Gates, as well as its effort to implement [the Pandemic Treaty](#), said Lawrie.

"One of those amendments [of the Pandemic Treaty] is to give the director general of the World Health Organization the power to declare an actual or potential health emergency," she said.

Many definitions related to health have been changed during the pandemic, including the WHO changing the definition of a pandemic from an infectious disease that causes high numbers of death to just an infection.

"You can imagine the implication of that. 'Oh, there's a new bug going around. Everybody go home, stay home,'" said Lawrie. "Herd immunity has been redefined, and it used to be that herd immunity was something that could occur naturally. Now it's being associated with vaccination only."

The World Council for Health

COVID-19 is on the rise in the United Kingdom, which Lawrie believes is due to the boosters. There is also a rise in excess deaths compared to pre-vaccine periods. Lawrie said the excess deaths are the equivalent of a 737 crashing every day of the week.

These excess deaths may include people who die from mental health illness, lack of timely medical care due to lockdown backlog, or direct vaccine injuries, she said.

The UK government and the WHO have noticed Lawrie's organization, the World Council for Health, but continue to ignore Lawrie's calls to ensure vaccine safety and accountability, while Big Tech has tried to censor the council's work, she said.

Doctors all around the world like Peter McCullough and Paul Marik—who are following the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm—are persecuted, said Lawrie. "There are doctors who are practicing clinically, who've been saving thousands of lives during COVID. I'm thinking particularly of [Dr. Jackie Stone in Zimbabwe](#), and she currently faces imprisonment," said Lawrie.

The World Council for Health provides resources for the vaccine injured, including information about support groups, protocols for vaccine detox and injuries, and links to other important medical websites. In September 2021, they launched the "At-Home COVID Treatment Guidelines" leaflet, which has been downloaded over 1 million times, Lawrie said.





Lawrie's organization consists of 170 small and large organization members, and the aim is to decentralize health care and return the power to individual countries and communities.

"Our goal is really for everyone to be their own counsel for health, so they don't need to outsource their decision making to corrupt authorities," she said.

Jan Jekielek is a senior editor with The Epoch Times and host of the show, "American Thought Leaders." Jan's career has spanned academia, media, and international human rights work. In 2009 he joined The Epoch Times full time and has served in a variety of roles, including as website chief editor. He is the producer of the award-winning Holocaust documentary film "Finding Manny."

The New US National Biodefense Strategy—Necessary but Not Sufficient

By Nicole Lurie, MD, MSPH and Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD

JAMA Health Forum. 2022;3(12):e225206

Source: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2799306>

Dec 01 – In October 2022, the Biden administration released its [National Biodefense Strategy](#) that aims to protect the US and the world from a bioterrorism event, an accidental laboratory leak of a dangerous genetically engineered virus, or another devastating pandemic. Most welcome is the recognition that infectious diseases know no borders. Among other steps, the strategy calls for supporting at least 50 countries to build capacity to conduct essential public health activities, support that is essential to detect and stop diseases in their tracks worldwide. What is missing from the strategy, however, is a clear vision of how to strengthen public health agencies in the US.

The enormous toll of COVID-19 in the US has many causes, but a failure to invest in biodefense is not one of them. The US has spent billions of dollars on countermeasure development since the first bioterrorism bill passed in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks as well as on Public Health Emergency Preparedness programs at the state and local levels. In many ways, these investments worked as intended—facilitating the rapid development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines and supporting staff to create management structures for emergencies.

However, US efforts to prepare for pandemics have assumed that public health agencies are capable of handling core tasks—gathering and analyzing essential data, working with health care systems, and communicating lifesaving information effectively. The pandemic revealed that these capacities in the US are [uneven at best](#). Until the US has a public health system that protects everyone, regardless of where they live, the national biodefense strategy will not achieve its goal of protecting the public in a biological emergency.

Need for Day-to-Day Monitoring

The National Biodefense Strategy prioritizes data integration for early warning that brings together disease reports, clinical information, and laboratory results in real time to detect "bioincidents." But foundational to seeing what is new and dangerous is being able to monitor what is happening every day, and most US public health agencies have [little insight](#) into day-to-day changes in many urgent health threats from opioid overdoses to asthma. Even with the current "triple-demic" of COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus, many health departments are [struggling](#) with limited surveillance data.

Major investments are needed to modernize public health systems at a cost of \$36.7 billion over 10 years, according to [an estimate](#) by the Healthcare Information Management Systems Society. These investments could digitize core public health functions, which would allow public health and clinical data systems to communicate more readily and help the public understand health concerns in their communities. In June 2022, the Commonwealth Fund Commission on a National Public Health System [called for](#) the US Department of Health and Human Services to oversee these investments, beginning with new efforts by the US Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to share data with communities around the country.

Workforce Needs

The [National Biodefense Strategy](#) notes that local health departments must be "operationally ready to assess, prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from nationally or internationally significant biological incidents." Recognizing that these tasks cannot be handled by a small preparedness office, the [report](#) calls for health agencies to recruit, train, and sustain "a robust, flexible, permanent cadre of essential critical health infrastructure workers, public health laboratory scientists, technicians, and data quality managers."





ICI C²BRNE DIARY – December 2022

These specialized skills are necessary—but not sufficient—for emergency preparedness. To succeed in an emergency, health departments also need epidemiologists, inspectors, outreach workers, communications experts, and coordination with the private sector.

These efforts faltered during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the 2008 recession, tens of thousands of people left the state and local public health workforce. These losses have eroded core capabilities, and recent estimates have found a workforce gap of more than 80 000 people in public health. Filling this gap requires people with modern-day public health skills, such as managing and analyzing health care data, communicating effectively with the public, working with health care systems, and earning trust through community partnerships.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a surge of funding to public health agencies. But without regular, sustainable funding—what experts have estimated to be about \$4.5 billion each year¹—it is often impossible to create permanent positions. Instead, many health departments hire temporary employees or consultants, many of whom work remotely and may disappear when temporary funding is exhausted. News reports have indicated that thousands of well-trained public health staff hired for the pandemic are already being let go.

In exchange for sustainable funding, Congress and the public should expect that a public health agency can meet its core functions and responsibilities and has hired the workforce needed to do so. As proposed by the Commonwealth Fund Commission, these benchmarks could be assessed by a streamlined and focused system of accreditation for public health agencies.

Reliable readiness for emergencies should be built on the foundation of excellent day-to-day public health work. Epidemiologists and laboratory scientists can characterize patterns of transmission of HIV, tuberculosis, and other common infectious diseases as well as map major environmental hazards, such as lead paint. Policy experts and outreach workers can focus on overdose prevention, cardiovascular disease prevention, and maternal health. The tools of data gathering, analysis, planning, outreach, coalition building, and action for these and other daily challenges all can be quickly applied to novel threats.

Communicating and Engaging With the Public

Another area of focus for the National Biodefense Strategy is to “promote evidence-based health communication to the public” that builds vaccine confidence and counters misinformation. The lack of success in these areas cost the US early during the COVID-19 pandemic; even now, more than 60 countries have a higher percentage of the population that is fully vaccinated than in the US. But the strategy does not acknowledge the roots of this challenge in inequity and political polarization. Many racial and ethnic minority groups were skeptical of vaccination based on historical and present mistreatment and poor access to health care.² Others in the US were pushed to oppose vaccination by political leaders and ideologically biased media.³ Without addressing these underlying causes, the task of providing “clear, consistent, and coordinated information” will remain profoundly difficult and public health efforts in a potentially deadly outbreak, which rely so fundamentally on public trust, will also fail to achieve their goals, creating unnecessary risks for communities. Thus, the Commonwealth Fund Commission called for more fundamental reforms, including enhancing community engagement in public health decision-making, investing in a broad range of community partnerships that tackle fundamental drivers of poor health, and strengthening transparency and integrity in federal activities.

Of course, these changes will take time and resources—perhaps more than what is contemplated by the National Biodefense Strategy. But the scale of needed reforms cannot be the reason to ignore their importance. No investment in complex surveillance systems will reach its potential without well-trained public health workers to work with these systems every day. No advanced countermeasures will save the lives at greatest risk unless they reach and are accepted by the people who need them most. The National Biodefense Strategy needs a companion strategy focused on core capabilities because successful public health emergency preparedness depends on a strong public health system.

Severe COVID Looks Scarily Like Old Age in The Human Brain, Study Finds

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/severe-covid-looks-scarily-like-old-age-in-the-human-brain-study-finds>

Dec 12 – Severe COVID-19 looks scarily like old age in the human brain, according to a postmortem analysis of 54 healthy and infected individuals.

The authors of the study say their research is the first to link COVID-19 to molecular signatures of brain aging.

"We observed that gene expression in the brain tissue of patients who died of COVID-19 closely resembled that of uninfected individuals 71 years old or older," says public health scientist Jonathan Lee from Harvard University. The sample, made up of people in their early twenties to their mid-eighties, includes 21 individuals who had





had severe COVID-19, a single asymptomatic individual, and 22 people who were not infected with the [coronavirus](#). Researchers also compared their results to an uninfected individual with [Alzheimer's](#) disease and another group of 9 uninfected individuals with a history of hospitalization or ventilator treatment.



Illustration of neurons in the human brain frontal cortex. (Kateryna Kon/Science Photo Library/Getty Images)

Using RNA sequencing technology on samples of the prefrontal cortex, scientists found those with severe COVID-19 showed enriched genetic expression patterns associated with aging.

The brains of infected individuals looked more similar to older individuals in the control group, regardless of their actual age. In simple terms, genes that were usually upregulated in aging, like those to do with the immune system, were also upregulated in severe COVID-19.

At the same time, genes downregulated in aging, like those to do with synaptic activity, cognition, and memory, were downregulated in severe COVID-19, too.

"We also observed significant associations of cellular response to DNA damage, mitochondrial function, regulation of response to stress and oxidative stress, vesicular transport, calcium homeostasis, and insulin signaling/secretion pathways previously associated with aging processes and brain aging," the authors [write](#).

"Altogether, our analyses suggest that many biological pathways that change with natural aging in the brain also change in severe COVID-19."

Ever since the novel coronavirus [SARS-CoV-2](#) began to infect humans at a global scale, scientists have feared possible long-term consequences.

Damage to the brain is one of the most problematic outcomes. Severe cases of COVID-19 are [often associated](#) with brain fog, memory loss, stroke, delirium, or coma. In October of 2020, [initial brain scans](#) on COVID-19 patients revealed worrisome signs of neurological disturbance and impairment.

[Later studies](#) have since found [even mild COVID-19](#) can affect the brain, although it is still not clear how long these changes might last or how they compare to those with severe COVID-19.

Every year that passes, health experts have a slightly better idea of the long-term outcomes that this global [pandemic](#) might bring. Three years in, it's not looking good.

The findings of the current study follow on the heels of another [paper](#), published earlier this year, that found the cognitive impact of severe COVID-19 is equivalent to about 20 years of aging.

Neuropathologist Marianna Bugiani from Amsterdam University [told](#) *Nature* the new findings open up "a plethora of questions that are important, not only for understanding the disease, but to prepare society for what the consequences of the pandemic might be." She also added that these consequences might not be clear for many more years to come. And by this time, the global community will probably be suffering from repeat COVID-19 infections.

Who knows how multiple sicknesses will impact our cognitive power in the long run?

Interestingly, in the current study, researchers found no genetic evidence of the SARS-CoV-2 [virus](#) in the brains of infected patients, which suggests the neurological consequences of the virus may not be directly due to their presence in the nervous system.





The authors did, however, find evidence that [tumor necrosis factor](#) (TNF), which is associated with inflammation, brain aging, and aging-induced cognitive decline, was present at higher levels in the brains of infected individuals.

Genetic factors associated with antiviral immune responses were also elevated.

The authors [argue](#) both of these pathways "may lead to significant deteriorating effects in the brain in the absence of SARS-CoV-2 neuroinvasion."

In light of their findings, the team says people who are recovering from COVID-19 should get neurological follow-ups. If the very presence of this novel virus is enough to trigger inflammation in the brain, it's possible that any infected individual is at risk of brain deterioration.

Until experts know more, the authors say doctors and patients should focus on other risk factors for dementia that are in our control, like weight, alcohol consumption, and exercise.

Avoiding future COVID-19 infections to the best of your ability is also probably a good idea.

► The study was published in [Nature Aging](#).

Tiny, Menacing Microclots May Explain Long COVID's Symptoms

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/985271>

Dec 08 – When Hannah Davis saw the first visual confirmation of long COVID in her blood – a firework-like display of fluorescent green dots against a black background – she was overwhelmed with an odd sense of relief. In early November, she became one of the first U.S. long COVID patients to be tested for microscopic blood clots, catching up to South Africa, Germany, the U.K., and other countries that are already experimenting with related treatments.

"It was validating," says Davis, who [excitedly shared the images](#) of her clots on Twitter. "It's basically the first test specific to long COVID that is promising and scientifically sound and incorporates research from [other post-viral illnesses](#)."

Davis donated her blood at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, with a few other founding members of the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, all of whom had been infected in the first wave of the pandemic and are still sick nearly 3 years later. Seeing the pictures of their blood clots, Davis and her fellow patients cried what she called happy tears. Then the reality of having those notorious blood clots sank in.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency room doctors and others treating patients noticed the sickest produced [excessive blood clots](#). The clots clogged kidney dialysis machines, caused strokes, and killed patients [long after they left the hospital](#). Some long COVID researchers have suspected smaller, less obvious blood clots may be causing many of the puzzling symptoms reported by patients who have lasting effects of the virus.

The theory is that these weird and persistent clots, called microclots, might be blocking delicate blood vessels throughout the body, and stopping oxygen from getting to where it needs to go, causing everything from [shortness of breath](#) and organ damage to brain fog and debilitating fatigue. But if all the havoc is being done inside these minuscule clots, regular pathology tests won't pick it up. A network of specialists is now setting out to see if specialized tests can be accessible and if the clots can be treated.

Clots Are Complicated

Blood clotting is an important and elaborate process that prevents excessive bleeding. Normally, the body will dissolve blood clots on its own, but in certain conditions, such as chronic fatigue syndrome (also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis or ME/CFS), diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and acute and long COVID, researchers have noticed that damage to the blood vessel walls caused by inflammation can lead to abnormal proteins and platelet activity. This leads to small, strange clots that can block capillaries – the smallest blood vessels – from taking enough oxygen to tissues throughout the body.

Net-like protein strands called fibrin are a critical part of clots. Viewed on an electron microscope, "they look like a bowl of spaghetti that you've just drained in a colander," says Douglas Kell, PhD, a systems biologist at the University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom. The unusual "amyloid"-like version of the proteins seen in microclots, on the other hand, resemble "a disgusting mess that you sort of parboiled. It's all stuck together," Kell says.

These misfolded clots stain strongly with a special dye that glows bright green so they can be seen under a microscope, and they take longer to break down than normal clots through a natural process called fibrinolysis.

This problematic clotting may persist in blood for months or years after infection, [according to research](#) by Kell and physiologist [Etheseria Pretorius](#), PhD, of Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Kell and Pretorius had studied unusual clotting for years before the pandemic. They also led the first team to





discover these microclots in the blood of people with both [acute](#) and [long COVID](#) and have since authored a series of [papers on the subject](#).

There are a number of theories as to what causes long COVID – from [viral reservoirs](#) and [debris](#) to overactive [immune and antibody responses](#) – but approaching the disease with a “systems biology mindset,” they actually feed into each other, says Pretorius.

Microclots in long COVID are being studied around the world by [researchers and clinicians](#) who refer to themselves as #TeamClots on Twitter, and who are hopeful that this theory represents a new and vital target in understanding and treating long COVID and related disorders. And they’re working to put this research into clinical practice.

In November, Pretorius traveled to the United States to train research teams on her identification techniques and help set up the equipment.

Still, why microclots happen after COVID-19 in the first place isn’t entirely understood. Pretorius and Kell believe that [the spike protein](#) in the virus might be the trigger in people with long COVID. That potential cause has been supported by a recent [Harvard Medical School](#) study that detected the SARS-CoV-2 spike antigen in most long COVID patients up to 12 months after diagnosis, suggesting the presence of an active and persistent viral reservoir in the body after infection.

“One core question is: Do these microclots actually represent a root cause, or are they in response to something else that’s ongoing?” says Michael VanElzakker, PhD, a neuroscientist and long COVID researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and co-founder of the PolyBio Research Foundation, which is focused on studying the viral reservoir. “If the clots are leftover residual from acute COVID, that would be one story. But if they’re forming in response to spike protein that’s leaking out from a reservoir … then that would be another story because you could clear the clots all day, but then they’ll just re-form.”

Treatment for Microclots

There are a number of early experimental treatments for these COVID-related microclots that still need to be tested in clinical trials. Among them, a small but promising [preprint](#) study from Pretorius and Kell shows that a combination of antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs for those with microclots improved long COVID symptoms and reduced microclots.

Meanwhile, researchers in Germany are reporting some success after an expensive and [controversial](#) dialysis-like treatment called heparin-induced extracorporeal LDL precipitation, or [HELP apheresis](#), which has been performed on thousands of patients.

There is also considerable interest in far more accessible over-the-counter enzyme supplements that Pretorius and Kell will be studying in a lab environment next year. These include serrapeptase, lumbrokinase, and nattokinase (made from bacteria in silkworm gut, from earthworms, and from a bacterial fermentation of soybeans, respectively) that work as natural clot busters.

These supplements have long been available at health food stores, and long COVID patients are [self-reporting their effects](#).

Most long COVID experts and hematologists advise against taking unproven supplements, anticoagulants, or blood-thinning treatments because of the obvious risks of excessive and even fatal bleeding. But they certainly understand why patients would feel the desperate need for them.

“I can’t imagine being in a situation where you’re just supposed to sit around and wait for genius researchers to solve it,” says VanElzakker. “The way that it played out with AIDS, is that a lot of the information about the things tested came from the patients.”

Davis is also worried about patients recommending unproven treatments to each other, as individuals could react poorly.

In the meantime, Davis, Pretorius, and other long COVID advocates and researchers who believe that microclots are the best explanation for the condition say the next steps should be made urgently: Make the tests accessible, fund more studies, and start clinical trials. Relying on routine lab tests that show long COVID patients are perfectly healthy when they obviously are not is no longer acceptable, not just for the patients, but for researchers seeking solutions. “These individuals are really, really sick,” says Pretorius. “So just because Western medicine hasn’t found the biomarker that the regular pathology laboratory can easily test doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist.”

Biodefense and Emergency Use Authorization

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221212-biodefense-and-emergency-use-authorization>

Dec 12 – Dr. HyunJung Kim recently published an article, titled “Biodefense and emergency use authorization: different originations, purposes, and evolutionary paths of institutions in the United States and South Korea,” in [Globalization and Health](#).

Here is the article’s abstract:

Background: Emergency-use-authorization (EUA) is the representative biodefense policy that allows the use of unlicensed medical countermeasures or off-label use of approved medical countermeasures in response to public health emergencies. This article aims to determine why





the EUA policies of the United States and South Korea produced drastically different outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how these outcomes were determined by the originations and evolutionary paths of the two policies."

Method: Historical institutionalism (HI) explains institutional changes—that is, how the institution is born and how it evolves—based on the concept of path dependency. However, the HI analytical narratives remain at the meso level of analysis in the context of structure and agency. This article discusses domestic and policy-level factors related to the origination of the biodefense institutions in the United States and South Korea using policy-learning concepts with the Event-related Policy Change Model."

Results: The 2001 anthrax letter attack (Amerithrax) and the 2015 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak prompted the establishment of biodefense institutions in the United States and South Korea, respectively. Due to the different departure points and the mechanism of path dependency, the two countries' EUAs evolved in different ways—the United States EUA reinforced the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) function, while the South Korea EUA strengthened the Non-Pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) function."

Conclusion: The evolution and outcomes of the two EUAs are different because both policies were born out of different needs. The United States EUA is primarily oriented toward protecting homeland security against CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) threats, whereas the South Korea EUA is specifically designed for disease prevention against infectious disease outbreaks."

Return of the Mask? COVID, RSV, Flu Renew Calls to Cover Up

Source: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/985422>

Dec 12 – For those of you anxiously waiting to see if the spread of respiratory illnesses in the United States will be as bad as some experts predict, you might wonder if we're going back to recommendations to wear face masks again.

Actually, health officials have already started. Along with recommending that everyone traveling on planes, trains, buses, and other public transportation wear masks, the CDC also recommends Americans in communities with high COVID-19 numbers again wear a mask indoors in public spaces.

This is welcome news for some people – many of whom say they never stopped wearing masks.

Natalie, a 36-year-old mother of three children who runs a small business in Arizona, is among them.

"I continue to mask because, for me and my family at least, it's a simple measure that helps protect us and others," she says.

She's listened to doctors, epidemiologists, and virologists who say that catching COVID-19 multiple times increases the risk of having long-term health complications. "I don't want that for my family, and I don't want to do that to anyone else, either," she says.

Natalie's positive attitude doesn't mean it will be easy to get everyone back in the mask-wearing habit, many experts say.

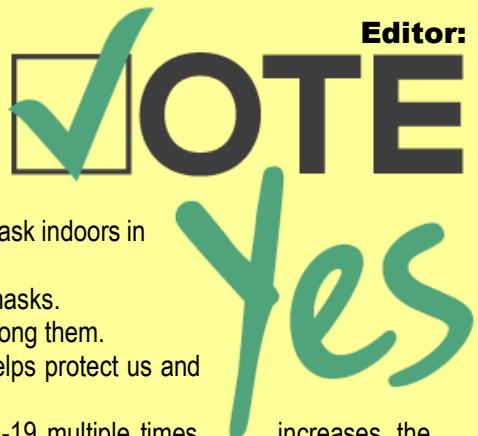
"We started to see the unfortunate and expected rise of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations nationally after the Thanksgiving holiday," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, MD, said during a media briefing this week. "This rise in cases and hospitalizations is especially worrisome as we move into the winter months when more people are assembling indoors ... and as we approach the holiday season where many are gathering with loved ones across multiple generations."

In addition to staying up to date on vaccinations, Walensky said the CDC encourages everyone "to wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses." This is especially true, she said, for the 5% of the population "currently living in counties with high COVID-19 community levels."

For example, five neighboring counties in New York – Nassau, Suffolk, Queens, Kings (Brooklyn), and Bronx – report enough COVID-19 cases to meet the indoor masking criteria. These high-level areas and others are indicated in orange on the CDC COVID Data Tracker map of the United States.

Priya Nori, MD, an infectious disease specialist in the Bronx, one of the affected counties, says she has been seeing a steady increase in COVID-19 cases in the past couple of months, including after Thanksgiving.

"But there has certainly been a shift in how ill our patients are presenting," says Nori, an associate professor of medicine and orthopedic surgery at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.





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Overall, COVID-19 is less severe, she says, with most patients having upper respiratory illness and not the more concerning lower respiratory tract symptoms. Nor are they seeing patients with a need for oxygen, major blood clots, or strokes.

"This is definitely a different ball game."

Nori adds an important caveat: "We still are very much concerned about the population we consider to be moderately to severely immunocompromised. For those folks, I don't want to share a blanket statement that the illness is very mild."

She emphasizes that masks and other precautions remain essential for the immunocompromised, people over 65, and anyone else at a higher risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19.

The CDC continues to recommend masking for anyone who may be immunocompromised or at increased risk of severe disease, Walensky said.

"So Over Covid"

"Complacency is our enemy. That is my biggest fear – that people are so desensitized and feeling that it is the norm," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said during a recent update on winter health preparedness, including COVID-19, the flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). "Yes, it has become our norm, but it does not have to be the norm that everybody gets sick. That's what we're trying to fight against."

Bruce Farber, MD, chief of public health and epidemiology for Northwell Health in Manhasset, NY – within Nassau County – is likewise concerned. "It appears very unlikely that New Yorkers are going to start wearing masks again unless rates skyrocket," he says.

Nori agrees that complacency remains a challenge. "I don't think that New Yorkers are any different from the rest of Americans or the rest of the world, in that they've had now many multiple waves of COVID go through their communities, they've been ill at least once themselves, and they are pretty experienced at this point with the pandemic."

A potentially high level of "mask fatigue" means people are perhaps less likely to adhere to these community-level recommendations from the CDC, Nori says. People are "just so over COVID."

A Ferocious Start to Flu Season

"That being said, there are so many good reasons for wearing a mask right now, the least of which is influenza," Nori says. "We skipped multiple flu seasons through the pandemic ... and this season is attacking early and intensely."

"In my opinion, especially with the numbers that I'm seeing in terms of positive tests locally, I do feel that flu is really the one to watch for this winter," she says. "Definitely the message is to keep your eye on flu this season because it's coming with ferocity."

Walensky pointed out that flu cases "continue to be the highest we have seen at this time of year in a decade, demonstrating the significantly earlier flu season we are experiencing."

Farber agrees that the flu should be taken seriously. "The flu has the potential to cause over 50,000 deaths this year. It is a very good reason to get vaccinated and to wear masks in crowded areas."

"Not a Forever Situation"

The flu can lead to severe illness, disability, and death. "For that reason, I advise patients and I advise colleagues that masking continues to be the way to go, especially for the next couple of weeks," Nori says. "If we can remain disciplined about that for the next couple weeks, I think we'll have a much better holiday season and be much better prepared to get through the winter."

"It's not a forever situation," she says. "There will be a day where we can dial this back again."

Masks are "going to be super important to help us get safely through the winter until the spring," Nori says. "And then we can all celebrate if flu and COVID are coming down again at that point, which I think they will."

RSV is also particularly worrisome at the moment. The virus is infecting so many young children that it continues to challenge the capacity of children's hospitals nationwide. It's also infecting many people over age 65 as well. Adding to the concern: There is no approved vaccine against RSV, although several are in development.

What About the Worried Well?

The CDC recommendations are just that – recommendations. "One need not wait for CDC action in order to put a mask on," Walensky said.

The New York state commissioner of health agrees. "What I want to say is that people should feel free to wear a mask. Everybody can make the decision to wear masks, and I want people to be aware of the settings in which mask wearing would be wise," Mary T. Bassett, MD, said during the governor's news briefing.



She emphasized these are recommendations, not mandates. "We've gone through a period where people are tired of being told what to do, but we in public health are now emphasizing that people can make decisions on their own and make decisions to be protected," Bassett said.

"The people that are testing negative for flu, COVID, and RSV should be very glad, but understand those aren't the only respiratory infections that are out there," Walensky said. "People can still have regular colds."

"But all these things we talked about – masking, washing your hands, covering your cough, and staying home when you're sick – all those things can keep down the spread of all these respiratory infections," and they're important, Walensky said. "You know, it's that time of year."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Once upon a time we used to joke with the (mostly) Japanese travelers at international airports for wearing face masks! I apologize now and say YES, especially in crowded confounded places.

WHO estimates nearly 15 million COVID deaths – triple official figures

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/who-estimates-15-million-covid-deaths/>



Dec 14 – A new report published in *Nature* offers the most detailed estimate to date of COVID-19-related deaths. The research found up to the end of 2021 there were likely nearly 15 million deaths associated with COVID around the world. The estimate is three times higher than officially reported mortality figures and is likely to be much higher when data from 2022 is eventually included.

By the end of December 2021, the World Health Organization had logged 5.4 million COVID-19 deaths from almost 300 million infections. These numbers were based on a piecemeal assortment of reporting measures that varied from country to country.

Since the beginning of the pandemic it has been clear the official mortality figures for COVID-19 were an undercount of the real impact of this novel disease. Studying excess mortality, that is the amount of deaths over the expected year-to-year number, affords researchers a more accurate way to quantify loss of life. However, not every country in the world can accurately track general mortality figures. In fact, only around 50% of nations



generally deliver granular overall mortality data to the WHO. So in order to get a more accurate picture of the pandemic researchers look to mathematical models to estimate likely numbers.

In this new study looking at likely excess death figures across the entire world over 2020 and 2021, researchers estimate 14.83 million deaths can be associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers note these mortality figures are "staggeringly high" and easily surpass per capita mortality from the 1957, 1968 and 2009 influenza pandemics.

"To place these estimates in context, the leading cause of death in 2019 was ischaemic heart disease, with 8.9 million deaths," the researchers write in the study. "Information on the leading causes of death is not currently available for the pandemic years, but we would expect COVID-19 to be among the leading causes of death in 2020 and the leading cause of death in 2021."

Despite the stark figures, these WHO estimates still sit along the lower end of the spectrum in terms of other excess death estimates. A study published in *The Lancet* earlier this year suggested around 18 million deaths could be associated with the pandemic across 2020 and 2021.

And, perhaps most upsetting, these estimates only span to the end of 2021. Excess death figures across most countries moving through 2022 have remained high, suggesting the true death toll up to now may be closing in on 30 million.

Recent research has suggested the death toll of the 1918 flu pandemic, adjusted to 2020 population figures, was around 75 million. And while that number is much more horrifyingly larger than what has been estimated from COVID, it is important to note current mortality figures have been moderated by the incredible development of new vaccines.

An analysis last month estimated COVID vaccines prevented more than three million deaths in the United States alone. And an investigation earlier this year from Imperial College London researchers estimated vaccines prevented 20 million deaths worldwide, in 2021 alone.

So, despite the horrific estimates of current likely COVID-19 deaths over the past three years, it's plausible to presume those numbers would have been significantly higher without the rapid development of vaccines and antivirals.

► The new study was published in Nature.



Source: <https://thebulletin.org/global-biolabs/>

In 2022, the Bulletin partnered with GlobalBiolabs, an initiative to provide details of high containment labs around the world and their policies and practices to ensure safe, secure and responsible pathogen research.

The Bulletin collaborated with researchers from King's College London and George Mason University to re-launch their map of biosafety level 4 (BSL-4) and BSL-3+ labs around the world.

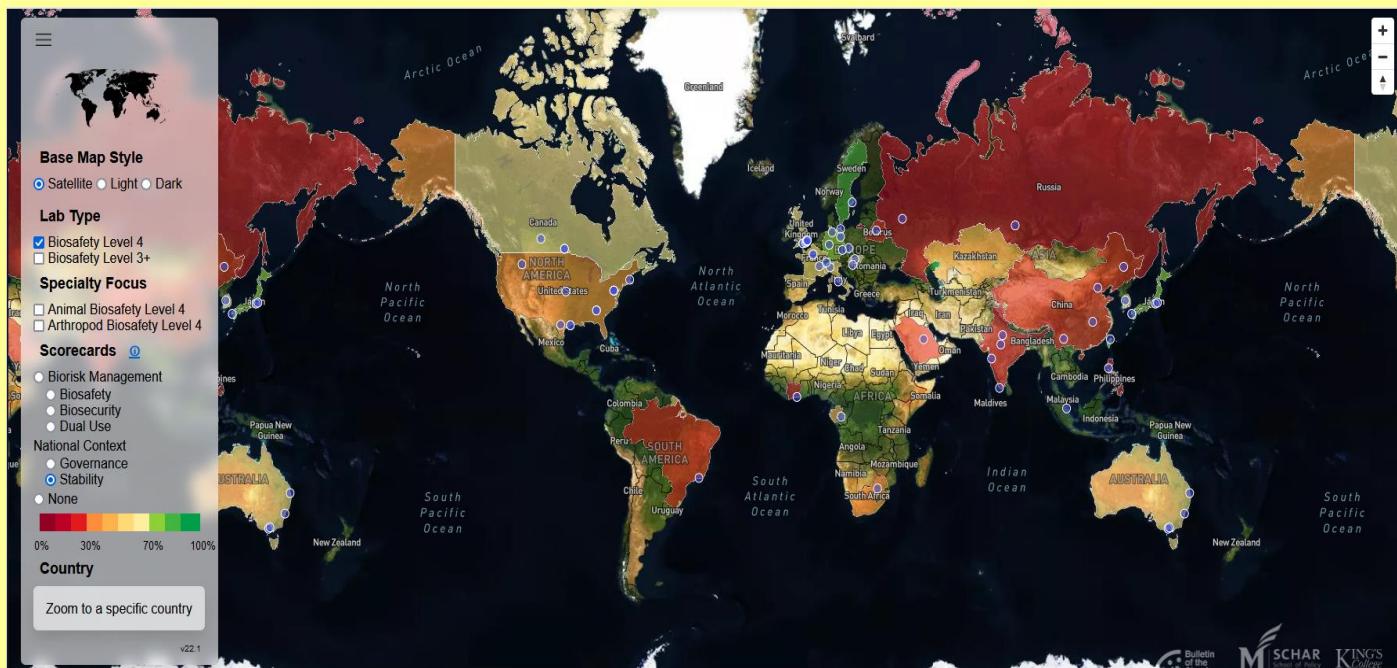
For countries with BSL-4 labs, the map now includes scores that assess a country's approach to biorisk management and the country's national governance and stability.

The map now presents the most recent research findings and will serve as a tool for developing policy recommendations to strengthen biorisk management in BSL-4 labs.

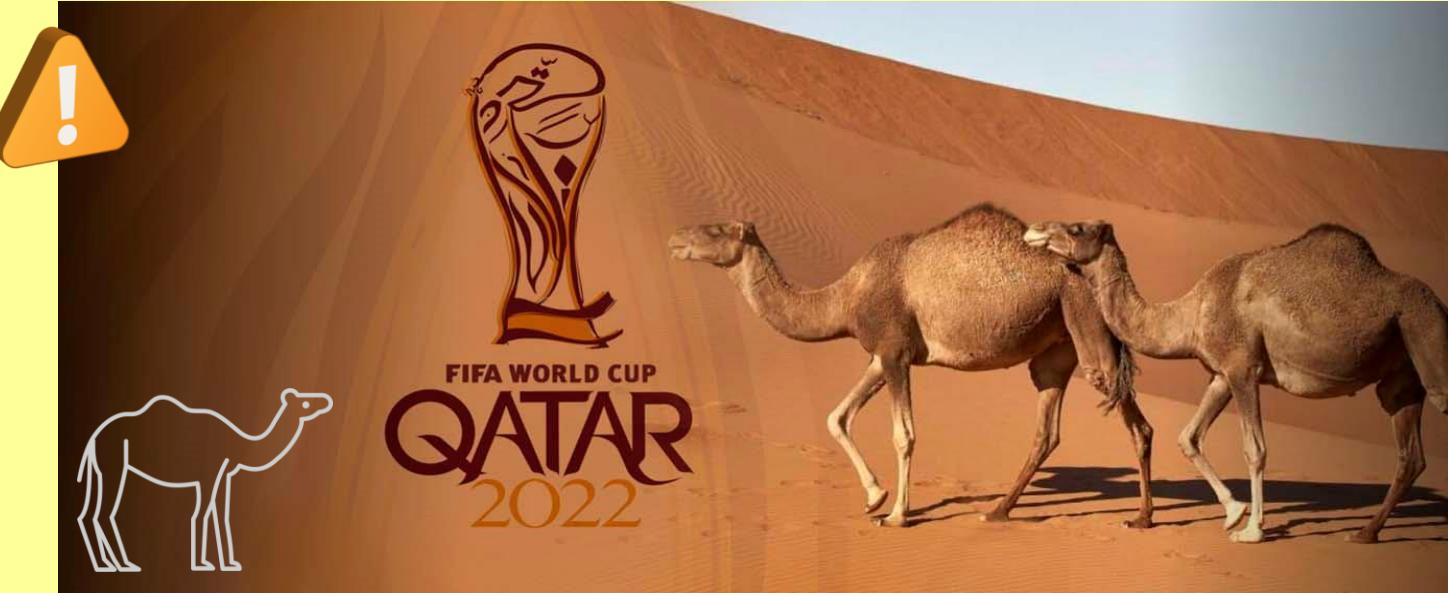


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Explore the map and more of the Bulletin's biosecurity coverage below.



Camel virus spread after the FIFA World Cup?



Monkeypox Virus DNA Polymerase Structure Solved Using Cryo-EM

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/virology/monkeypox-virus-dna-polymerase-structure-solved-using-cryo-em/>

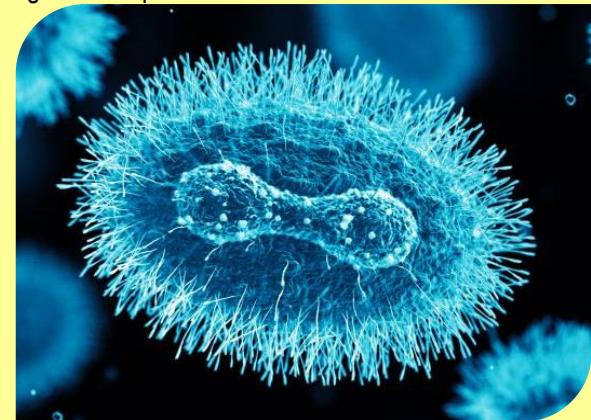
Dec 16 – In July 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that monkeypox was a public health emergency of international concern. And, as of early December 2022, more than 82,000 human monkeypox cases have been confirmed in 110 countries worldwide. New preventative and therapeutic measures against the virus are needed. Monkeypox is caused by monkeypox virus, an enveloped double-stranded DNA virus that belongs to the





Orthopoxvirus genus of the *Poxviridae* family. The monkeypox virus has its own DNA polymerase F8 which, when together with the processive cofactors A22 and E4, constitutes the polymerase holoenzyme for genome replication.

Now, researchers present a high-resolution structure of the monkeypox virus DNA polymerase holoenzyme—a complex that plays a key role in the genome replication process of the virus. The findings reveal the mechanism that underlies monkeypox virus genome replication and could be used to guide the development of antiviral drugs. Qi Peng, PhD, and colleagues at the CAS Key Laboratory of Pathogen Microbiology and Immunology, Institute of Microbiology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, used cryo-electron microscopy to determine a high-resolution structure of the monkeypox virus DNA polymerase holoenzyme. They determined the holoenzyme structure in complex with DNA using cryo-electron microscopy at the global resolution of ~2.8 Å. According to the findings, the holoenzyme possesses an architecture that indicates a “forward sliding clamp” mechanism for DNA replication. Monkeypox virus polymerase has a similar DNA binding mode to other B-family DNA polymerases from different species. These findings reveal the mechanism of the monkeypox virus genome replication and may guide the development of anti-poxvirus drugs.



► This work is published in *Science*, in the article, "[Structure of monkeypox virus DNA polymerase holoenzyme](#)."

Single Low-Dose Nanovaccine for Long-Term Protection against Anthrax Toxins

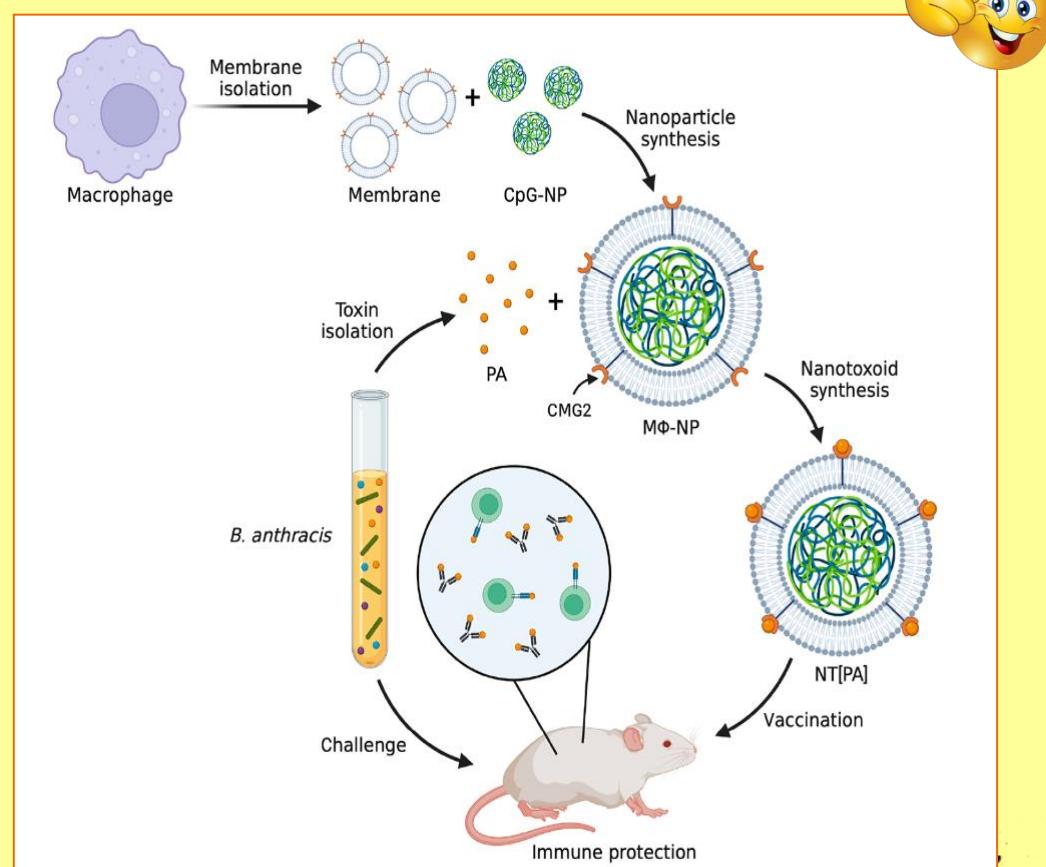
By Maya Holay, Nishta Krishnan, Jiarong Zhou, et al.

Nano Lett. 2022, 22, 23, 9672–9678 | Publication Date: November 30, 2022

Source: <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/pdf/10.1021/acs.nanolett.2c03881>

Anthrax infections caused by *Bacillus anthracis* are an ongoing bioterrorism and livestock threat worldwide. Current approaches for management, including extended passive antibody transfusion, antibiotics, and prophylactic vaccination, are often cumbersome and associated with low patient compliance.

Nanotoxoids for protection against anthrax. Macrophage membrane-coated nanoparticles (MΦ-NPs) are fabricated by coating macrophage membrane expressing the anthrax receptor CMG2 onto polymeric CpG-loaded nanoparticle cores (CpG-NPs). MΦ-NPs are then complexed with anthrax toxin protective antigen (PA) to form nanotoxoids (NT[PA]). Mice vaccinated with NT[PA] generate antigen-specific immunity that protects them from anthrax toxins. Created with BioRender.





Here, we report on the development of an adjuvanted **nanotoxoid vaccine** based on macrophage membrane-coated nanoparticles bound with anthrax toxins. This design leverages the natural binding interaction of protective antigen, a key anthrax toxin, with macrophages. In a murine model, a single low-dose vaccination with the nanotoxoids generates long-lasting immunity that protects against subsequent challenge with anthrax toxins. Overall, this work provides a new approach to address the ongoing threat of anthrax outbreaks and bioterrorism by taking advantage of an emerging biomimetic nanotechnology.

In **conclusion**, we have developed a biomimetic nano-vaccine capable of safely and effectively generating protective immunity against anthrax toxins. By taking advantage of the natural cellular tropism of PA, a major *B. anthracis* virulence factor, we generated a nanotoxoid formulation by utilizing a macrophage membrane-coated nanoparticle encapsulated with a potent immunological adjuvant. The nanoparticles were able to complex with PA upon coincubation, thus enabling the resulting formulation to effectively co-deliver both antigen and adjuvant to antigen-presenting cells. When administered to mice, a single low dose of the nanotoxoids elicited strong humoral and cellular immunity, outperforming free PA delivered with CpG or the clinically relevant alum as an adjuvant. Future studies can be conducted to optimize the dosing regimen and evaluate the potential benefit of booster vaccinations. Optimization of the membrane coating source, including the use of genetically engineered cell membranes, could increase the antigen loading capacity of the nanotoxoids. Overall, this platform demonstrates the versatility of biomimetic nanotechnology, which enables the streamlined development of novel vaccine formulations capable of strongly activating immune responses for protection against infectious diseases.

US public not warned that monkeys imported from Cambodia carried deadly pathogens

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/dec/18/monkeys-imported-us-from-cambodia-carried-deadly-pathogens>

Dec 18 – Animal activists are calling for the US government to stop the importation of non-human primates for laboratory use after documents from the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal that deadly pathogenic agents, zoonotic bacteria and virus – including one deemed to be a bioterrorism risk – entered the country with monkeys imported from Asia between 2018 and 2021.



Documents obtained by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta) and seen exclusively by the Guardian, along with a case report by the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, reveal that there have been six cases of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* identified in primates imported from Cambodia to the US.

The CDC didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Peta has written to the CDC urging that they immediately stop the importation of all non-human primates for the protection of US residents, for the integrity of science, and for the welfare of the animals and their ecosystems.

B pseudomallei, endemic in Southeast Asia, causes melioidosis, a rare but potentially deadly disease in humans, usually caused by contact with the pathogen in soil or water. It has a mortality rate of up to 50% and *B pseudomallei* is, according to the CDC, a "Tier 1 select agent" with potential as a bioterrorism agent.

Dr Lisa Jones-Engel, a Peta senior science adviser, told the Guardian: "There is no indication that the CDC or research industries have been transparent with the public about these diseased monkeys."

Published last week, the case report titled "Melioidosis in a Cynomolgus Macaque Imported to the United States from Cambodia" reveals that one of the macaques entered the US from Cambodia by air with 359 other macaques and was diagnosed with *B pseudomallei* in quarantine in Texas in January 2021.





Imported non-human primates, or NHPs, are held in CDC-mandated quarantine for 31 days while undergoing testing for infectious diseases.

The macaque was euthanized due to concerns about zoonotic transmission and potential introduction of this Tier 1 select agent into the environment. The report reveals that the other 359 monkeys shipped with the infected monkey “appeared healthy at the end of the quarantine period and were released from CDC-mandated quarantine”.

However, asymptomatic infected animals can shed *B pseudomallei* into the environment. Jones-Engel said: “Monkeys imported from Asia can harbor the Burkholderia pathogen for months, shedding the bacteria via their feces, urine, blood and saliva into the environment. The CDC knows the danger to humans and has failed to warn the public.”

The report confirms that the importation of animals infected by *B pseudomallei* could introduce the organism into the US, stating: “Vigilance is critical to preventing its introduction via imported animals.” At present, melioidosis is not a notifiable disease, though the report authors recommended this be considered.

The report identified five other macaques from Cambodia in separate shipments that were diagnosed with *B*



pseudomallei, one during quarantine, and four others several months after they'd been released from quarantine.

Direct transmission of the disease from animals to humans is rare but can occur. There are about 12 human cases a year in the US, mostly in travelers to Asia or Northern Australia. However, on 27 July 2022, the same day Peta obtained a response to a freedom of information act request, the [CDC issued](#) a warning about the presence of *B pseudomallei* in the environment in the Mississippi Delta. This is the first time it has been detected in the soil and water in the US and came after two people in the state of Mississippi were diagnosed with melioidosis, one in 2020 and the other in 2022. Neither had traveled, and both were hospitalized but recovered.

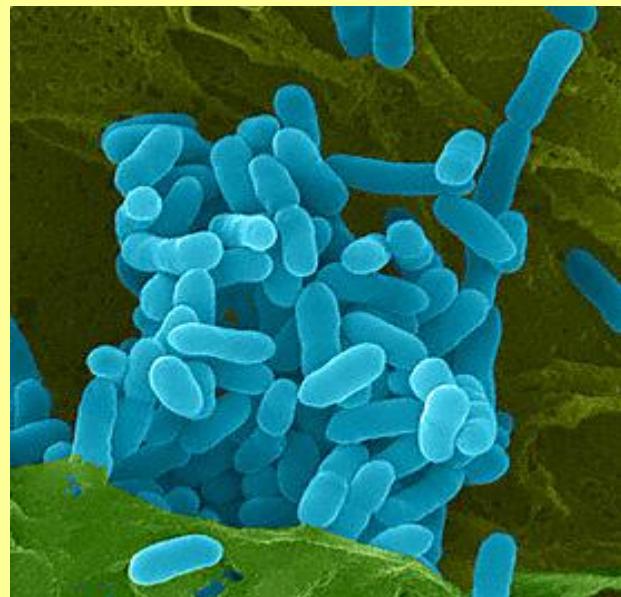
The papers the CDC released in July also reveal that since 2019 the increase in imported primates has been accompanied by an increase in monkeys arriving with other zoonotic pathogens, including tuberculosis, *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*, *Y enterocolitica*, *campylobacter*, malaria, as well as hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, “consistent with filovirus infection”. Filoviruses include Ebola and Marburg viruses. Both are Tier 1 select agents.

Primates who were dead on arrival increased from two in 2017 to 11 in 2021, and monkeys dying in quarantine increased from 29 to 125. Primates who were ill but recovered and released rose by 2,280% from five to 119 in 2021, and overall mortality increased from 31 to 136 over five years.

A veterinary adviser for Action for Primates, Dr Nedim Buyukmihci, told the Guardian: “Non-human primates in a free-living situation are unlikely to spread disease to people. But, when they are trapped, transported or confined, they become highly distressed and can shed disease-causing organisms. This data emphasize the potentially significant public health risk of transporting and using non-human primates in laboratories.”

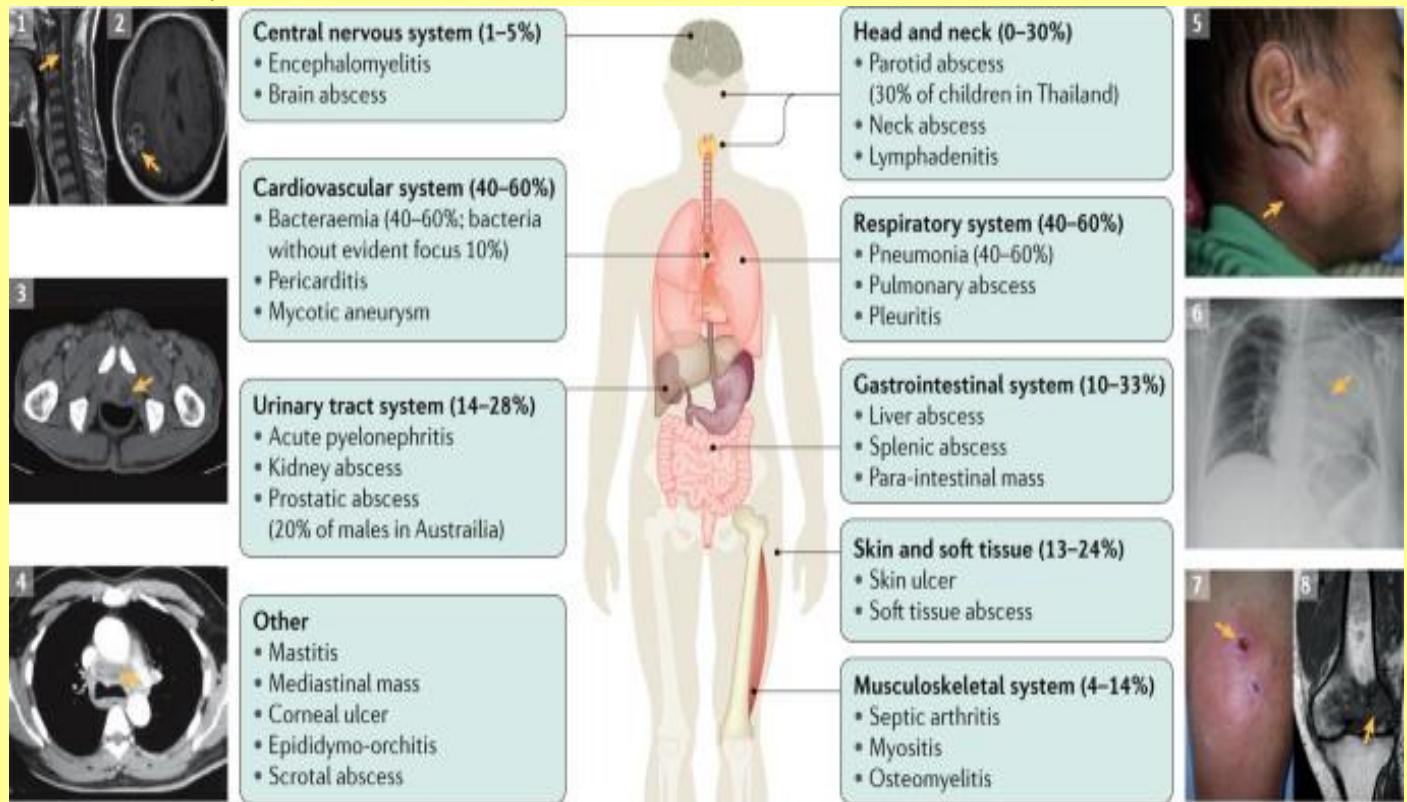
Long-tailed macaques, natives of south-east Asia, are the most heavily traded primate for use in laboratories and are now endangered in part due to the exploitation by the research industry.

Historically, China exported the majority of macaques to the US but ceased trading during the coronavirus pandemic. This, combined with increased demand from the research industry, has resulted in a rise in wild

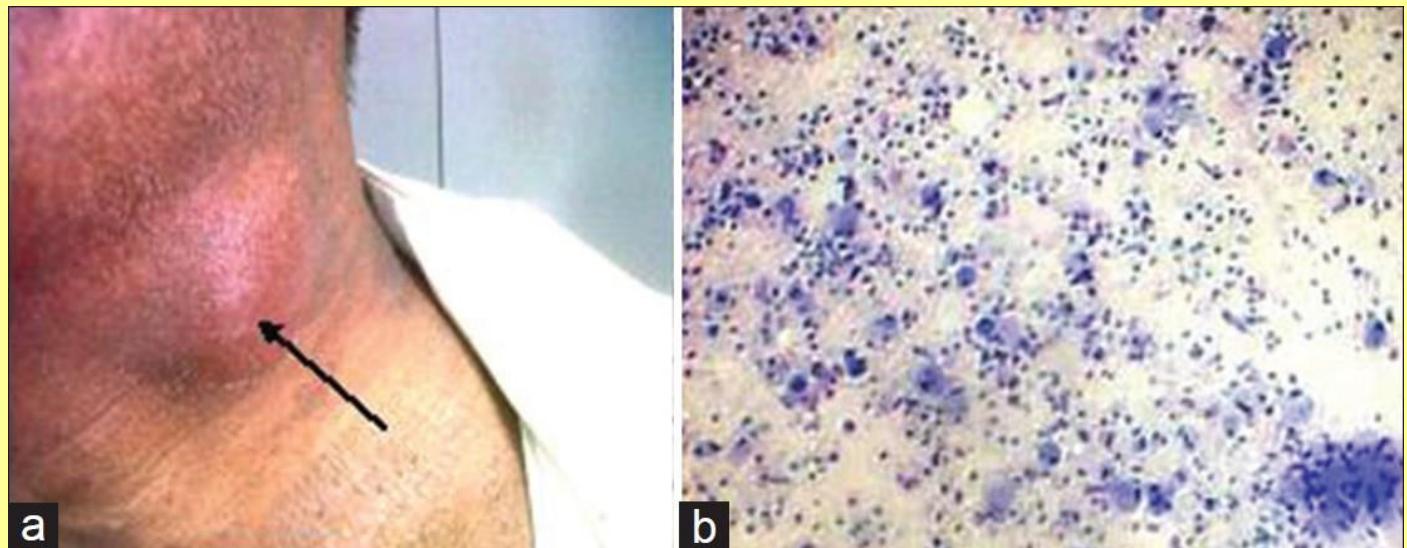


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and farmed monkey exports from Cambodia, Mauritius, Vietnam and resumption in trade from Indonesia, Laos and the Philippines.



Trappers in Indonesia were [filmed](#) inflicting violence on wild macaques during their capture.



(a) Clinical picture showing the swelling before treatment. (b) FNAC showing necrotizing granulomatous picture (May Grunwald Giemsa, $\times 40$)

In recent years, the number of macaques exported from Cambodia to the USA has more than tripled from 5,851 in 2018 to 18,870 in 2021. The US is the largest importer of primates in the world and the only country to have legally imported wild macaques since 2014. Jones-Engel said: "The increase of diseases in the NHP is potentially a result of the increase in wild-caught monkeys being inserted into the monkey farms and/or exported."





Long-tailed macaques are often used in [toxicity testing](#) to identify adverse effects of drugs or chemicals. The restrained monkeys are dosed by injection, infusion or a tube forced into their stomach without anesthetic. Dosing can last for months or years with side effects including pain, shaking, vomiting, internal bleeding and death.

[Proponents](#) say there would be no production of medicines without animal research. However, the US Food and Drug Administration reports that animal tests have a [92% failure](#) rate predicting the safety or effectiveness of pharmaceuticals in humans.

Cambodia has eight monkey farms. However, the industry has come under scrutiny when in November this year, federal prosecutors charged eight members of a primate smuggling ring for their role in laundering 3,000 endangered wild macaques from Cambodia to US commercial exporters. The US justice department's indictment charges two Cambodian government wildlife officials, and the owner and staffers from Vanny Bio Resources, a macaque supplier in Cambodia. The indictment includes two unnamed co-conspirators in the US in Alice, Texas, and Miami.

The CDC has previously said Cambodia suspended its export of primates to the US.

"Primate experimentation in the US is part of the global wildlife trade in endangered species," Jones-Engel said. "It's unspeakably cruel and a substantive threat to public health. It must end," said Dr Jones-Engel.

Pfizer's COVID-19 Vaccine Linked to Blood Clotting: FDA

By Zachary Stieber (senior reporter for The Epoch Times based in Maryland)

Source: https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/pfizers-covid-19-vaccine-linked-to-blood-clotting-fda_4930377.html



Dec 17 – **Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine has been linked to [blood clotting](#) in older individuals, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).**

FDA researchers, crunching data from a database of elderly persons in the United States, found that pulmonary embolism—blood clotting in the lungs—met the initial threshold for a statistical signal and continued meeting the criteria after a more in-depth evaluation.

Three other outcomes of interest—a lack of oxygen to the heart, a blood platelet disorder called immune thrombocytopenia, and another type of clotting called intravascular coagulation—initially raised red flags, researchers said. More in-depth evaluations, such as comparisons with populations who received influenza vaccines, showed those three as no longer meeting the statistical threshold for a signal.

Researchers looked at data covering 17.4 million elderly Americans who received a total of 34.6 million vaccine doses between Dec. 10, 2020, and Jan. 16, 2022.

The study was published by [the journal Vaccine](#) on Dec. 1.

The FDA said it was not taking any action on the results because they do not prove the vaccines cause any of the four outcomes, and because the findings "are still under investigation and require more robust study."

Dr. Peter McCullough, chief medical adviser for the Truth for Health Foundation, told The Epoch Times via email that the new paper "corroborates the concerns of doctors that the large uptick in blood clots, progression of atherosclerotic heart disease, and blood disorders is independently associated with COVID-19 vaccination."

Pfizer did not respond to a request for comment.

How the Research Was Done

FDA researchers, with assistance from researchers with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), analyzed data from the CMS database. They included Medicare Fee-for-Service beneficiaries aged 65 or older who received a vaccine within the timeframe, were enrolled when they were vaccinated, and were enrolled for a "clean window" of time prior to vaccination. The window was 183 days or 365 days, depending on the outcome.

About 25 million people receive the Medicare Fee-for-Service, but only about 17 million were vaccinated during the period of time studied.

Researchers used probability testing to detect an increased risk of one or more of 14 outcomes following vaccination. The goal was to see whether vaccination may increase the risk of adverse outcomes, such as pulmonary embolism, or blood clotting.

The initial results of the safety monitoring detected an increased risk of four events, the FDA [announced on July 12, 2021—months after first detecting the possible issues](#). They were the same four outlined in the new paper, which is the first update the agency has given on the matter since its announcement. As of Jan. 15, 2022, 9,065 cases of a lack of oxygen to the heart—known as acute myocardial infarction—were detected, researchers revealed in the new study. As





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of the same date, 6,346 cases of pulmonary embolism, 1,064 cases of immune thrombocytopenia, and 263 cases of the coagulation were detected.

Table S108. Summary of Primary and Sensitivity Rapid Cycle Analyses for Acute Myocardial Infarction, Pulmonary Embolism, Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation, and Immune Thrombocytopenia identified after BNT162b2Pfizer BioNTech vaccination in Medicare Shared Systems Database

Analysis	Data Through Signal Date of Primary Analysis		Data Through May 1, 2021		Statistical Signal	Last LLR / Critical Value
	Observed Cases	RR	Observed Cases	RR		
AMI						
Primary	1526	1.42	6224	1.13	Yes	11.42/3.49
Variation in monthly rates	1526	1.24	6224	1.02	No	0.00/4.10
Influenza-Vaccinated	1526	1.41	6224	1.14	Yes	10.93/3.50
PE						
Primary	1197	1.54	4538	1.36	Yes	23.76/3.77
Variation in monthly rates	1197	1.35	4538	1.25	Yes	14.15/4.03
Influenza-Vaccinated	1197	1.48	4538	1.30	Yes	15.65/3.73
Peri-COVID	1197	1.22	4538	1.10	No	0.00/3.59
Inpatient-Only	498	2.17	1876	1.45	Yes	63.23/4.90
DIC						
Primary	82	1.91	181	1.30	Yes	6.45/6.03
Variation in monthly rates	82	1.59	181	1.16	No	0.00/5.05
Influenza-Vaccinated	82	1.87	181	1.30	No	0.14/5.15
Peri-COVID	82	1.54	181	1.06	No	0.00/4.98
ITP						
Primary	644	1.44	691	1.42	Yes	5.87/5.07
Variation in monthly rates	644	1.37	691	1.35	No	2.15/5.07
Influenza-Vaccinated	644	1.28	691	1.26	No	0.03/5.17
Peri-COVID	644	1.64	691	1.62	Yes	6.86/5.77

Abbreviations: LLR, log likelihood ratio; RR, risk ratio

One of the tables from the new paper.

The primary analysis showed a safety signal for all four outcomes. Researchers tried adjusting the numbers by using different variables. For instance, at one point they adjusted for the variation of background rates, or the rates of each outcome in the general population prior to the pandemic. After certain adjustments—not all—the myocardial infarction, immune thrombocytopenia, and intravascular coagulation ceased being statistically significant.

Pulmonary embolism, though, continued to be statistically significant, the researchers said. Pulmonary embolism is a serious condition that can lead to death.

Limitations of the study included possible false signals and possible missed signals due to factors such as parameters being specified wrongly. The conditions that didn't trigger a signal included stroke, heart inflammation, and appendicitis.

The signals were detected only after Pfizer vaccination. Analyses for signals after receipt of the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines did not show any concerns.

Moderna and Johnson & Johnson did not respond to requests for comment.

Side Effects

All three vaccines have been linked to a number of side effects. Heart inflammation is causally linked to the Moderna and Pfizer shots, experts around the world have confirmed, while Johnson & Johnson's has been associated with blood clots.





Other conditions, such as pulmonary embolism, have been reported to authorities and [described in studies](#), though [some papers](#) have found no increase in risk following vaccination.

Approximately 4,214 reports of post-vaccination pulmonary embolism, including 1,886 reports following receipt of Pfizer's vaccine, have been reported to the U.S. Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System as of Dec. 9.

As of the same date, 1,434 reports of post-vaccination myocardial infarction, including 736 following receipt of Pfizer's vaccine; 469 reports of post-vaccination immune thrombocytopenia, including 234 following receipt of Pfizer's vaccine; and 78 reports of post-vaccination intravascular coagulation, including 42 after receipt of Pfizer's vaccine, have been reported.

Reports to the system can be made by anybody, but most are lodged by health care workers, studies show. The number of reports are an undercount, according to studies.

The new study states that the FDA "strongly believes the potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccination outweigh the potential risks of COVID-19 infection." No evidence was cited in support of the belief.

The FDA is set to meet with its vaccine advisory panel in January 2023 about the future of COVID-19 vaccines, as the vaccines have been performing much worse against Omicron and its subvariants.

McCullough told The Epoch Times: "A shortcoming of the CMS surveillance system is that it did not capture prior and subsequent SARS-CoV-2 infection which accentuate the cumulative risk of COVID-19 vaccination. Given the large number of individuals who have been vaccinated, the population attributable fraction of medical problems ascribed to the vaccines is enormous. I have concerns over the future [burden to the healthcare system](#) as a consequence of mass indiscriminate COVID-19 vaccination."

Cranberry-boosted lipstick inactivates viruses and bacteria on contact

Source: <https://newatlas.com/health-wellbeing/antimicrobial-cranberry-lipstick/>

Dec 19 – While most of us wouldn't dream of not washing our spoons or forks after each use, we have no problem repeatedly using – or even sharing – a never-washed tube of lipstick or lip balm. That's why scientists have recently developed a cranberry-fortified antimicrobial lipstick.

First of all, why not just create a lipstick that's infused with antibiotics? Well, for one thing, the more often antibiotics are used, the greater the resistance bacteria will develop to them. Antibiotics also don't work on viruses, plus they may cause unwanted side effects when ingested.

That's where cranberries come in.

They contain micronutrients known as polyphenols, which [inhibit the activity](#) of viruses, bacteria and fungi. As a result, the microbes are [unable to communicate with one another](#) for reproductive purposes, so their populations simply die out instead of increasing. And because polyphenols don't outright kill the microbes, bacteria are unlikely to become resistant to them.

For the experimental antimicrobial lipstick, Prof. Ángel Serrano-Aroca and colleagues at Spain's Universidad (Valencia Catholic University Saint Vincent Martyr) added cream base. That base contained a number of skin-health-vitamin E, provitamin B5, babassu oil and avocado oil.

The resulting lipstick was then added to cultures in which viruses, bacteria and *Candida albicans* fungus were growing. Among the viruses was a surrogate of COVID-19-causing SARS-CoV-2, while the bacteria included harmful drug-resistant varieties such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli*.

It was found that just one minute after contact, all of the viruses were completely inactivated. The bacteria and fungus were likewise substantially inactivated after five hours of contact.

"The proposed antimicrobial lipstick offers a new form of protection against a broad range of microorganisms, including enveloped and non-enveloped viruses, bacteria, and fungi, in the current COVID-19 pandemic and microbial-resistant era," the scientists stated in a paper on their research, which was recently published in the journal [ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces](#).



Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir cranberry extract to an existing lipstick boosting ingredients, such as shea butter,





Outbreak of unknown disease observed in Afghanistan

Source: https://m.akipress.com/news:689438:Outbreak_of_unknown_disease_observed_in_Afghanistan/



Dec 21 – An outbreak of an unknown disease has been observed in Zabul province of Afghanistan. The Khaama agency reported with a reference to head of local health department Abdul Hakim Hakimi.

More than **80 people** have been diagnosed with the disease, Hakimi says. Two children died.

The disease was detected in Shahjoy district, which is located in the east of the province. **The main symptoms of the disease are high fever and bleeding from the nose and mouth.** However, doctors still cannot give an accurate definition of infection.

At least 200 people were diagnosed with an unknown contagious disease in the same province in May, the Hasht-e Subh Daily reported. Dozens of patients were hospitalized. Then doctors compared the symptoms of the disease with cholera.

One of Long COVID's Worst Symptoms May Have a Potential, Readily Available Treatment

Source: <https://www.sciencealert.com/one-of-long-covids-worst-symptoms-may-have-a-potential-readily-available-treatment>

Dec 21 – Eight patients with long COVID had their '**brain fog**' lifted after taking a combination of medicines concocted by researchers at Yale University. **The combo includes guanfacine and an antioxidant called N-acetylcysteine (NAC).**

Both medicines are already FDA-approved and widely available for the safe treatment of ADHD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), Tourette's syndrome, and PTSD. Neither has severe side effects, and they are well-tolerated by almost everyone.

At the moment, guanfacine and NAC have only been tested on a small cohort of long haulers, most of whom were women, but the initial signs are extremely promising. More extensive clinical trials with placebo controls are needed to confirm the drug combo actually improves brain fog. However, given the severity and widespread nature of long COVID, the researchers think clinicians should consider prescribing guanfacine to patients. In the United States, NAC is available over the counter. "If patients have a physician who can read our paper, we're hoping that they can access help right now," says neuroscientist Amy Arnsten. She and her colleagues argue the combination of drugs could prove "immediately useful" to millions of desperate patients.

Currently, clinicians already commonly prescribe guanfacine for 'off-label' reasons, usually for other disorders of the prefrontal cortex. The non-stimulant drug is thought to increase activity in parts of the brain concerned with higher-order processing, improving attention, and reducing hyperactivity.

Brain fog is one of the most common symptoms of long COVID and similar illnesses like Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (CFS/ME). Long COVID casts a long shadow that goes far beyond a sense of mental fatigue. The lingering cognitive effects often lead to slowed thinking, memory loss, poor concentration, or feelings of confusion that can ultimately prove debilitating. Today, many with long COVID or CFS/ME have spoken out about how their illness has made it extremely difficult – or even impossible – to live an everyday healthy life, maintain interpersonal relationships, or keep working. Brain fog is one of the most debilitating parts. Since 2020, millions in the US have left the workforce because of their long COVID symptoms. And there's currently little doctors can do to help these patients reclaim their lives.

"There's a paucity of treatment out there for long COVID brain fog, so when I kept seeing the benefits of this treatment in patients, I felt a sense of urgency to disseminate this information," says neurologist Arman Fesharaki-Zadeh.

"You don't need to wait to be part of a research trial. You can ask your physician – these drugs are affordable and widely available." Fesharaki-Zadeh first decided to try the drug combination after considering the inflammatory effects of SARS-CoV-2 on the human body. His first long COVID patient





came to him in June 2020 complaining of severe brain fog, and yet then, as now, there was no approved treatment for the common symptom.

So Fesharaki-Zadeh thought outside the box: What he saw in his long COVID patient was oddly similar to what he saw in patients following a concussion. In many ways, long COVID presents like a hard knock to the head. Except, in this case, the SARS-CoV-2 virus was causing harm from within. NAC is an anti-inflammatory agent often prescribed for TBI patients, so Fesharaki-Zadeh decided to prescribe that drug first. The patient soon started reporting improved energy and memory.

Fesharaki-Zadeh added guanfacine to the mix, a drug that combats inflammation in the brain and seems to work in synergy with NAC. The brain fog kept dissipating. Researchers at Yale have since tested this drug combo on a dozen other patients with long COVID. Participants took 600 milligrams of NAC daily and 1 milligram of guanfacine at bedtime. After a month, the guanfacine dosage was increased to 2 milligrams. All eight participants who finished the trial reported substantial benefits to their memory, organizational skills, and multi-tasking abilities. Some people lost their brain fog completely; others said they had recovered their sense of self.

Two patients had to leave the trial because they experienced low blood pressure and/or dizziness. While no patient received a placebo, researchers say one case study proved "particularly illuminating". A nurse with long COVID, who had to take time off work, reported significant benefits to her working memory, executive functioning, and cognitive processing speed after taking NAC and guanfacine each day. Unfortunately, the medication triggered an episode of low blood pressure, so it had to be stopped momentarily. The nurse's concentration and brain power worsened almost immediately after the drugs were halted. When the patient decided to go back on the drug regime again, her brain fog lifted. For a year now, researchers say she has tolerated the medication without any episodes of low blood pressure.

"This was not a placebo-controlled trial, but anecdotes like this make one more confident that the relief is really due to the drug and not the placebo effect," says Arnsten. The team at Yale hopes their case study will lead to further clinical research.

●► The study was published in [Neuroimmunology Reports](#).

COVID Vaccine More Effective Than Infection Against Death, Hospital Care, Study Finds

Source: <https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20221222-covid-vaccine-more-effective-than-infection-against-death-hospital-care-study-finds>

Dec 22 – One of the first large studies to compare deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department (ED) visits among COVID-19 vaccine recipients versus those who were infected shows the vaccines were more effective in preventing negative outcomes, especially for adults aged 60 years and older. The study appears in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

The study, based on the entire population of Indiana, was conducted by researchers from the Regenstrief Institute, Indiana University School of Medicine, and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"While the incidence of COVID infection was higher in vaccine recipients (6.7 percent) than in individuals previously infected (2.9 percent), the vaccine protected against severe disease while natural immunity did not confer the same benefit," said study corresponding author and Regenstrief Institute Vice President for Data and Analytics Shaun Grannis, MD, in a press release.

Researchers matched 267,847 pairs of individuals and followed the pairs for 6 months after vaccination or infection. Individuals who received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine were matched with previously infected participants on index date, age, gender, race/ethnicity, ZIP code, and clinical diagnoses, the authors said.

Indiana residents ages 12 to 110 years were included in the study.

Vaccinated Had More, Milder Infections

The all-cause death and hospital admission rates for vaccinated individuals were both 37% lower than the rates for those who were previously infected. The rate of ED visits for all causes was 24% lower for vaccinated individuals than for the previously infected.

Only the cumulative infection rate was lower in those with natural infections: 6 months after the index date (of either vaccination or natural infection), the cumulative infection rate in the vaccinated was 6.7% (95% confidence interval [CI], 6.6% to 6.9%), more than twice the rate in those with previous infections, at 2.9% (95% CI, 2.9% to 3.0%).

Vaccinated children, especially, saw more infections at the 6-month follow-up than those with infections. But rates of ED visits, hospitalizations, and deaths were significantly lower for vaccinated children. For children and adolescents ages 12 to 20, the cumulative incidence rates of infection were, respectively, 8.1% (95% CI, 7.6% to 8.5%) and 5.2% (95% CI, 4.8% to 5.5%) for the vaccinated and previously infected.



That trend continued for adults ages 20 to 39, 40 to 59, and 60 to 79 years.

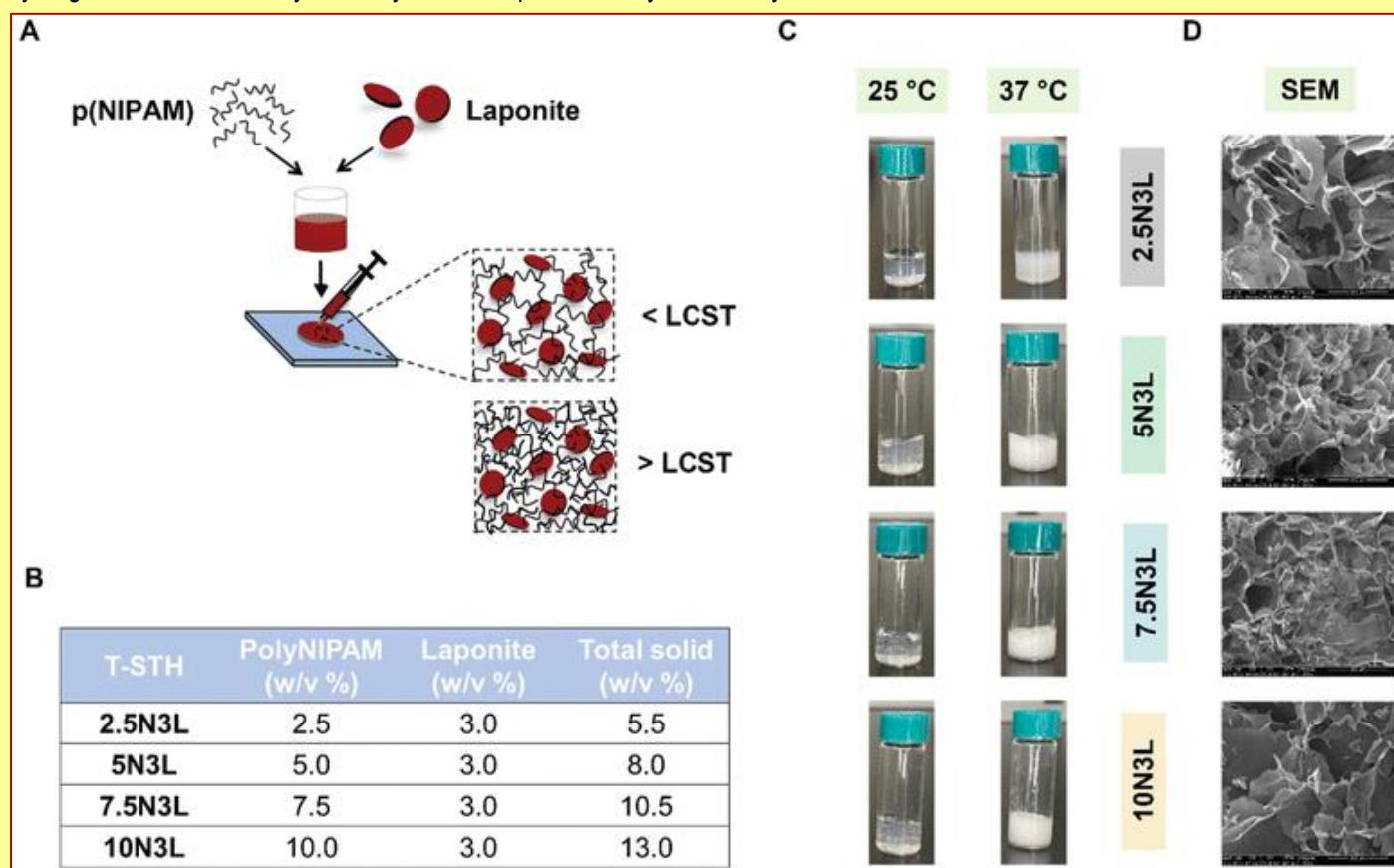
In young adults ages 20 to 39, rates of incident infection were higher among vaccine recipients (7.8%; 95% CI, 7.6% to 8.0%) than those with previous infections (3.2%; 95% CI, 3.0% to 3.3%) at 6 months, but the 6-month rate of hospitalization was significantly higher in the previously infected (2.1%; 95% CI, 2.0% to 2.2%) than in the vaccinated (1.2%; 95% CI, 1.1% to 1.3%).

"The data raises questions about the wisdom of reliance on natural immunity when safe and effective vaccines are available," the authors concluded. "The findings highlight the real-world benefits of vaccination and allude to the health consequences of SARS-CoV-2 after the initial exposure."

Heat-activated hydrogel could stop battlefield bleeds

Source: <https://newatlas.com/medical/heat-activated-hydrogel-stops-battlefield-bleeds/>

Dec 22 – When soldiers are wounded in battle, getting the bleeding under control is one of the most important life-saving measures medics can take. Due to the particular demands of doctoring in the field, however, this can be a significant challenge. A new injectable hydrogel that is activated by the body's own temperature may offer a way forward.



(A) Schematic showing the preparation of our p(NIPAM) and LAPONITE®-based T-SPH as an injectable hemostat for hemorrhage control. (B) Table summarizing the compositions of our p(NIPAM) and LAPONITE® T-SPH formulations used in this study. (C) Representative images of our p(NIPAM) and LAPONITE®-based T-SPH at 25 °C and at 37 °C. (D) Representative SEM images of our p(NIPAM) and LAPONITE®-based T-SPH. The scale bar is 200 μ m.

Hydrogels – chains of molecules that can store significant amounts of water – are something of a modern wonder material. Experiments have shown that they can function as armor, pull drinking water out of thin air, and act as window coatings that keep buildings cooler. Because of their high water content, they are also often used in the medical field, handling such tasks as plumping up damaged vertebral discs and making better brain implants. They've been widely studied as bandages too, employing proteins to kill bacteria at wound sites, helping seal up incisions in the digestive tract, and even bonding to wet skin through the use of ultrasound. Up til now though, according to researchers at the





Los Angeles-based Tarasaki Institute, hydrogel bandages have not been able to provide "fast, temperature-sensitive treatment of hemorrhage in a controllable manner." To remedy that situation, the researchers mixed a blood-coagulant with a temperature-sensitive polymer called poly(N-isopropyl acrylamide). They then conducted two experiments. In one, they simulated blood flow using a series of syringes and tubes kept at the same temperature as human blood in the body, and then created "wounds" in the tube. In another, they nicked the livers of mice to cause bleeding. In both cases, the hydrogel became a solid once exposed to the wound sites (whether real or simulated) and was highly successful in stemming the flow of blood. What's more, the gel could be easily removed using a cold saline wash that didn't cause the bleeding to resume. According to [an analysis of battlefield wounds](#) between 2001 and 2011, 87.3% of all battlefield deaths occurred before soldiers could reach a medical treatment facility, and of the potentially survivable injuries, 90.9% of the victims died of hemorrhage. So an easy-to-administer, effective solution that can stop bleeding could clearly have an impact on soldier mortality. Further adding to the potential of the new material, say the researchers, is the fact that it satisfies the requirements for battlefield hemorrhage control, which are: "(1) quick and adequate hemostasis in a wide range of injuries and wounds, (2) sustained hemostasis for several hours in situations of delayed evacuation, (3) easy removal without leaving any residues in the injury or wound, (4) ready to use and easy administration by a layperson with little to no training, (5) easy to manufacture and sterilize with low costs, (6) easily stored with prolonged stability even under extreme climate conditions, and (7) good biocompatibility with no adverse effects." The researchers also point out that the hydrogel can be used to treat any wounds – not just those sustained during battle – and that it could also be impregnated with drugs or other materials to enhance healing.

► The research has been published in the journal, [Biomaterials Science](#).

Loss of Smell During Long COVID Sniffed Out

Source: <https://www.genengnews.com/virology/coronavirus/loss-of-smell-during-long-covid-sniffed-out/>

Dec 23 – From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, profound changes in the sense of smell—including total smell loss—have been a notable (and perplexing) symptom of the infection. Although the changes in smell are often transient, many patients with COVID-19 have long-term olfactory dysfunction. Up until now, it has been unclear how SARS-CoV-2 infection causes persistent smell loss in a subset of patients.

Now, a new study reveals that **the reason some people fail to recover their sense of smell after COVID-19 is linked to an ongoing immune assault on olfactory nerve cells and an associated decline in the number of those cells**. The study involved analysis of olfactory epithelial samples collected from 24 biopsies, including from nine patients with objectively quantified long-term smell loss after COVID-19.

The study provides important insight into a vexing problem that has plagued millions who have not fully recovered their sense of smell after COVID-19. Although focused on the smell loss, the finding also sheds light on the possible underlying causes of other long COVID-19 symptoms—including generalized fatigue, shortness of breath, and brain fog—that might be triggered by similar biological mechanisms.

This work is published in *Science Translational Medicine*, in the paper, "[Persistent post–COVID-19 smell loss is associated with immune cell infiltration and altered gene expression in olfactory epithelium](#)."

"One of the first symptoms that has typically been associated with COVID-19 infection is loss of smell," said Bradley Goldstein, MD, PhD, associate professor in the department of head and neck surgery & communication sciences, Duke University School of Medicine.

"Fortunately, many people who have an altered sense of smell during the acute phase of viral infection will recover smell within the next one to two weeks, but some do not," Goldstein said. "We need to better understand why this subset of people will go on to have persistent smell loss for months to years after being infected with SARS-CoV2."

In the study, Goldstein and colleagues analyzed olfactory epithelial samples collected from 24 biopsies, including nine patients suffering from long-term smell loss following COVID-19.

Single-cell analyses on the biopsies, such as single-cell RNA-seq and immunohistochemistry, revealed widespread infiltration of T cells engaged in an inflammatory response in the olfactory epithelium, the tissue in the nose where smell nerve cells are located. This unique inflammation process persisted despite the absence of detectable SARS-CoV-2 levels.

More specifically, they found a "diffuse infiltrate of T cells expressing interferon- γ and a shift in myeloid cell population composition, including enrichment of CD207+ dendritic cells and depletion of anti-inflammatory M2 macrophages."

The authors added that, despite the absence of detectable SARS-CoV-2 RNA or protein, gene expression in the sustentacular cells of the olfactory epithelium reflected ongoing inflammatory signaling. Additionally,





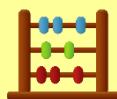
the number of olfactory sensory neurons were diminished, possibly due to damage of the delicate tissue from the ongoing inflammation.

"The findings are striking," Goldstein said. "It's almost resembling a sort of autoimmune-like process in the nose."

Goldstein said learning what sites are damaged, and what cell types are involved, is a key step toward beginning to design treatments. He added that the researchers were encouraged that neurons appeared to maintain some ability to repair even after the long-term immune onslaught.

"We are hopeful that modulating the abnormal immune response or repair processes within the nose of these patients could help to at least partially restore a sense of smell," Goldstein said, noting this work is currently underway in his lab.

Findings from this study could also inform additional research into other long COVID-19 symptoms that might be undergoing similar inflammatory processes.



Pandemics by numbers (as of December 24, 2022)

	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES
COVID-19	(644,117,458) 660,417,288	(6,629,552) 6,681,218	228	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, S. Korea, Japan
MPOX*	64,703 No change (3 rd month)	15** No change (3 rd month)	(114) 115	USA, Spain, UK, France, Germany

* Outside Africa | ** Outside Africa (Spain 2; India 1; Brazil 2; Peru 2; Ecuador 1; Mexico 1; USA 2; Belgium 1; Cuba 1; Czech Republic 1; Jamaica 1) – numbers in parenthesis are those of November 2022)

► When an “outbreak” spreads to more than 100 countries is still an outbreak or a pandemic?





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