PART A

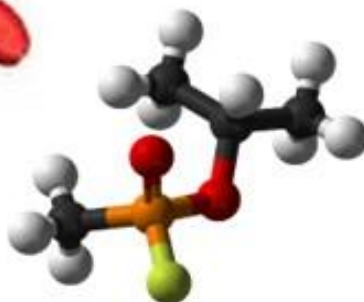**OPCW confirms**

all declared chemical weapons stockpiles verified as irreversibly destroyed

The United States of America, the last possessor State, completed the destruction of its declared chemical weapons stockpile

I may be WRONG BUT I Doubt It

C²BRNE DIARY– 2022©

July 2023

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Topics that attracted attention!

EDITOR'S CORNER

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

Editor-in-Chief
ICI C²BRNE Diary

Dear Colleagues,

The situation remains the same: proxy war in Ukraine – civil unrest in France – ongoing (terminated) pandemic – AI phobia – global stupidity.

France: "*Blue, white, red, the France to the French*!" In five nights of rioting, until Sunday (July 02) morning, the Ministry of the Interior counted about 12,031 burned cars, almost 2,508 public buildings set on fire or damaged, 273 attacks on police or gendarmerie units, more than 700 injured in the ranks of the law enforcement forces. More than 1 billion euros in financial cost. Main conclusion: integration of Muslim immigrants is a myth and even those born in France do not feel French at all. Multicultural policies are paying the price and new strategies need to be applied to avoid the repetition of riots in the future – not only in France but in all "gates" of the EU and beyond. Mass immigration and the settlement of culturally heterogeneous populations ring the bell to the deaf.

Proxy War: No need to write about the ongoing financial support to Ukraine – I just lost count! Germany promised 17 billion euro in weapons until 2027! (guess who is paying for the money …) 43% of Greeks, compared to 64% of citizens in the EU, support the financing of the purchase and supply of military equipment to Ukraine, according to the Eurobarometer survey released today and conducted in June 2023. In addition, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev launched a fierce attack against Ukraine and Volodymyr Zelensky, stating that he "insists on the continuation of the conflict with Russia, but it is Europe that pays for everything. Our rulers are frantically trying to convince us that by sending military aid, they are increasing our security. But in this way, the conflict deepens, while there are more and more victims", said the Bulgarian President demanding Sofia stop providing military aid to Kyiv. In addition, Ukrainians used cluster munitions against villages to force Russians to retreat – sounds like war crime also for those who provided this type of weapons. Guess who!

Question 1: Is it possible to discriminate between war and terrorism during a conflict?

Question 2: Is it worth being part of an alliance/organization (NATO) submitted to blackmailing by a member state?

CWAs: U.S. destroys last of its declared chemical weapons, closing a deadly chapter dating to World War I.

AI vs. WEF: Many say that AI poses a threat to society. We do not know that (yet). On the other hand, WEF consultant Yuval Noah Harari systematically tries to decompose all the values humanity is based on – from God to civil rights. You can choose your threat.

NATO: Following Finland, Sweden entered (expanding) NATO since the (US-lead) organization succumbed to Turkey's blackmail. Most probably Hungary will do the same. Perhaps it is time for

Greece to rethink which is the right side of History and act accordingly. To be honest, I would never expect to write such a thing in my life but it seems that tolerance has limits – even for a simple citizen like myself! Besides, we all know that when things are getting really serious, each nation is alone and all friends and allies are just sympathetic and sorry …

Heat: Punishing heat waves in Europe, North America and Asia broke records in cities around the Northern Hemisphere less than two weeks after the Earth recorded what scientists said were most likely its hottest days in modern history. The temperatures, afflicting so much of the world all at once, were a withering reminder that climate change is a global crisis, driven by human-made forces: the emissions of heat-trapping gases, mainly caused by the burning of fossil fuels. The return of El Niño, a cyclical weather pattern, is also having wide-ranging effects on weather around the world. The planet has warmed about two degrees Fahrenheit since the 19th century and will continue to grow hotter until humans essentially stop burning coal, oil and gas, scientists say. The higher temperatures contribute to extreme weather events and help make periods of extreme heat more frequent, longer, and more intense. The heat index in Iran reached 152 degrees Fahrenheit (66.7^0C) in recent days, near the limits of what healthy humans can normally withstand.

Enjoy your Summer!

The Editor-in-Chief

The only reason why the Pyramids exist in Egypt is because they were too heavy for British folks to steal and put in the British museum.

I AM GREEK AND I WANT TO GO HOME

Stolen Parthenon Marbles

Can You Give Someone Cancer?

Source: https://slate.com/technology/2011/12/hugo-chavez-suggested-the-united-states-gave-him-cancer-is-that-even-possible.html

2011 – Five South American presidents and former presidents, including Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, have been recently diagnosed with cancer. Chavez speculated on Wednesday that American agents may be inducing the disease in South American leaders by feeding them or injecting them with an unspecified substance. The State Department rejected Chavez's insinuation on Thursday. Can you give someone cancer? Not reliably. Injecting cancerous cells into a person isn't enough to give him the disease—the abnormal tissue has to penetrate and grow in other areas of the body. If you injected someone with live cancer cells, his immune system would almost certainly attack and destroy the foreign tissue. In theory, secret agents might be able to induce cancer in a leftist South American president with a severely weakened immune system. Or perhaps they could harvest tissue from him, expose it to a carcinogen, and then reintroduce it into his body. As far as the Explainer knows, however, these techniques have never successfully caused cancer in a human. While it's tough to induce cancer in an enemy, it's certainly possible to increase his chances of developing the disease. The most effective option would be radiation. Oncologists implant radiation-emitting devices the size of a seed into some patients to combat existing cancers. It's hard to say just how much the device would increase a healthy individual's risk of cancer, but leaving a high-intensity model inside the body for weeks or months would result in a significant dose of radiation. The victim would likely notice the implant, though. They're too big for an ordinary needle, and need to be inserted through a catheter. You could, alternatively, contaminate the victim's diet with high levels of aflatoxin, which is associated with liver cancer. Or you could infect him with any of a number of cancer-causing biological agents. Helicobacter pylori contributes to the development of gastric cancer, and human papillomaviruses can cause cervical, anal, and a few other forms of cancer. But these tactics probably wouldn't produce cancer in the short term and aren't guaranteed to have any effect at all. In countries with high aflatoxin exposure, like China and parts of Africa, fewer than 1 in 1,000 people develop liver cancer. Most of the research on infusing cancer into humans is decades old. In the 1950s, Dr. Chester Southam gained notoriety by injecting hundreds of cancer patients and healthy prison inmates with live cancer cells. Southam wasn't trying to give his subjects cancer. Rather, he was testing the efficiency with which the patients' immune systems would reject the cells. He was so confident that the patients would fight off the invaders that he thought it unnecessary to tell them what he was doing. None of Southam's patients seem to have developed metastatic cancer from his injections, and most modern oncologists believe the experiment posed little risk to the subjects. (One of the patients showed signs of a potentially spreading disease before dying of a separate illness.) Southam was sanctioned for fraudulent practices, however, and the case helped establish modern informed consent standards. Southam's experiments were abandoned in the 1950s, but he wasn't the last doctor to inject a patient with live cancer cells. In 2009, a Taiwanese doctor was accused of implanting cancerous uterine cells into healthy patients as part of an insurance scam. While the insurance companies were out more than $660,000, none of the victims developed cancer. Today, ethical physicians inject live cancer cells only into laboratory animals such as mice and rats. In most cases, the animals' immune systems are compromised, or the rodents have been genetically engineered to rapidly spread mutant cells.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: A recent post in Greek electronic press related to this article: Sotirios Tzoumas, ex secretary of late Archbishop Christodoulos and member of the "Greek Solution" party participating in the 2023 elections "*Christodoulos was defeated only by death with the planted cancers. I'm the only one who says it, Christodoulos had two primary cancers, in the large intestine and in the liver of the same size, 4 cm, which were not metastatic. They are cancers that, as a hepatologist from Japan who was with us in Miami when we went to do the transplant told us, are cancers that are found in secret service victims. I say it, I repeat it, and no one will stop me from saying it. From Miami until October 26 when we returned to Greece, where I also experienced its dramatic end.*"

Secret Sonic World War of Mass Carcinogenesis

By Robert Skopec | *ARC Journal of Immunology and Vaccines* 2018; 3(1): 1-3.
Source: https://www.arcjournals.org/journal-of-immunology-and-vaccines/volume-3-issue-1/3

Exposure to infrasound has been demonstrated to affect recipients with symptoms including fear, sorrow, depression, anxiety, nausea, chest pressure and hallucination. It can cause objects to move through vibration and the body's internal organs can be affected.

ICI C²BRNE DIARY – July 2023

The term infrasonic applied to sound refers to sound waves below the frequencies of audible sound. Nominally includes frequencies under 20 Hz. Sources of infrasound in nature includes volcanoes, avalanches, earthquakes and meteorites.

The healthy human ear can hear frequencies ranging from 20 Hz to 20,000Hz. Over time, the hair-like stereocilia may get damaged or broken. If enough of them are damaged, hearing loss results. The high frequency area of the cochlea is often damaged by loud sound.

Infrasound is sound which extends below the range of human hearing (from 20 Hz to 0.001 Hz), and it emitates from many natural and man-made sources. For example, some animals, such as whales, elephants and giraffes communicate using infrasound over long distances.

Sonic and ultrasonic weapons (USW) are weapons of various types that use sound to injure, incapacitate, or kill a target. New personal communications shows that infrasound can cause trough vibrations, resonance frequency about 7 Hz with internal organs of humans cause also cancer, such as colorectal cancer, pancreatic cancer, et [2].

Some of these weapons have been described as sonic bullets, sonic grenades, sonic mines, or sonic cannons. Some USWs make a focused beam of sound or ultrasound, some made an area field of sound.

As an example of used sonic weapon we can use The LRAD Sound Cannon as an acoustic weapon and communication device. Developed by the LRAD Corporation to broadcast messages and pain-inducing deterrent tones over long distances. LRAD devices come in various iterations that produce varying degrees of sound. They can be mounted to a vehicle or handheld.

Protests in Fergusson, Missouri have reached a terrifying fever pitch, and the ludicrously armed Fersguson Police Department is bringing all its crowd-control weapons to bear, tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets. One of the most controversial of those is the LRAD Sound Cannon. The device produces a sound that can be directed in a beam up to 30-degress wide, and the military-grade LRAD 2000X can transmit voice commands at up to 162 dB up to 5.5 miles away.

The LRAD Corporation says that anyone within a 100 meters of the device's sound path will experience an extreme pain. The version generally utilized by Police Departments (the LRAD 500X) is designed to communicate at up to 2000 meters during ideal conditions. In a typical outdoor environment, the device can be heard for 650 meters. The 500X is also capable of short bursts of directed sound that cause headaches in anyone within a 300 meter range. Anyone within 15 meters of the device's audio path can experience permanent hearing loss. LRAD claims the device is not a weapon, but a directed-sound communication device.

CONCLUSIONS

The LRAD device has been used on several occasions against activists in the USA. The first documented use was in Pittsburgh during the G20 Summit in 2009. The LRAD infra-sound device has potentially long-term effects, including permanent hearing loss. Human discomfort starts when sound hits 120 dB, well below the LRAD's threshold. Permanent hearing loss begins at 130 dB, and if the device is turned up to 140 dB, anyone within its path would not only suffer hearing loss, but also lose their balance, and be unable to move out of the path of the audio.

LRAD systems are deployed at airports to sonically deter birds from residing in the pats of aircrafts. The bio-acoustic deterrent helps minimize bird strikes. It means that this device is available for military, police, secret services and also for agricultural companies to sonically deter birds, (in Slovakia reportedly suspected: Rudolf Ertinger with AT Dunaj Dubnik, Slovakia, and his assistant Tomas Pinke, their cars: RV 137 ER, TN 181 EB, NZ 708 FY, NZ 702 EG), etc.

From the above information it follows that the similar bio-acoustic deterrents may have been developed also in other countries, first of all in other powers, such as Russia, China, India. Reportedly, above mentioned bio-acoustic deterrents may use also the Russian-based organized crime (RBOC), and also in different local groups of organized crime in V 4 countries.

As it was published in Western media, Russian ambassadors keep dying in mysterious ways. For example, former Russian ambassador to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, who died in February 2017 in New York. The US State Department asked the New York medical examiner's office to not release his autopsy.

Reportedly, seven Russian ambassadors have died in mysterious ways over the last two years. What's concerning here is that Russia, according to Richard Walton, Scotland Yard's former counter-terror commander, is skilled it disguising, probably by using biological (including bio-acoustic deterrents) or chemical agents that leave no trace. There are simply a lot of really weird coincidences in our world, Rolf Mowatt-Larsen, an intelligence expert at the Harvard Kennedy School, told to media [1].

From the official U. S. State Department data is known that already in the year 1978 from the 22 American diplomats working in Moscow had got 18 (!) problems with their carcinogenesis. This situation has been only worsened further during later decades' development at the field of sonic weapons. Today there are a lot of possibilities for example to use sonic weapons from the space satellites, like is category of Russian ERA-GLONASS satellites, (they can blockade completely the whole electronic system of the terrestrial cars), etc [3].

I was working at the Embassy of the Slovak Republic to Russia in Moscow during the years 2002-2006 as the First Secretary and have also some similar problems with Sonic Attacks. In December, 2017 I have sent my request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MoFA SR) in Bratislava to make investigation of my case of sonic health problems. The official Human Resources' General Secretary of the MoFA SR Pavol Sýkorčin have sent me several months ago a letter rejecting my request for as minimum financial rehabilitation from suffered damage during my above diplomatic mission in abroad.

Recently I hope that the investigation of the Havana-Case in U. S. State Department will prove my experiences. Especially, the AMA's journal JAMA is by my opinion not the best solution for a new types of Sonic Weapons mechanisms investigation. I am also publishing articles in U. S. scientific journals at the field of Biology during several years and I am convinced that the JAMA is too conservative, old-fashioned, out-dated scientific journal. They have only very limited information about new weapon technologies used recently by military and security forces of the modern states. From this reason I am rejecting the JAMA's conclusions in Havana-Case investigation as not enough qualified!

Today there is ongoing a Secret Sonic World War between big powers, and smaller countries too, first of all at the level of their Military Intelligence, which is one of the leading cause of the World Cancer Epidemic! The problem is that the victims of these secret operations don't know about the dangers of carcinogenesis caused by above Secret Sonic War…Uncontrolled Military Intelligence is today the Main Deficit in the Rule of Law System of the Modern Democracies in the 21st. It is functioning like "the State over State"**.** For this reason I am convinced, that the topic of sonic weapons caused carcinogenesis is also relevant for bigger interest from the circles of the United Nations and the World Health Organization and other similar international organizations.

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2. Skopec R: "Science Has a Solution for Sonic Weapons Caused Cancer", Research Trends in Hematology and Oncology, 2018. - Z - Skopec - RTHO - 101 - 6.6.2018.
3. ERA GLONASS is the modern Russian system of emergency response, similar to the European standard eCall /E112. The system is designed for use with the Russian global satellite navigation system GLONASS.

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The "Korean Solution" for Europe. Create a "Military Demarcation Line" in the EU, Put Ukraine under the Tutelage of Poland

By Manlio Dinucci
Source: https://www.globalresearch.ca/korean-solution-europe/5823552

June 26 – The "Conference on Ukraine's Recovery" was held in London, and marked the transition to a new phase of the war against Russia: the US, NATO, and the EU are not only continuing to arm Kyiv forces but are preparing to transform Europe in the forefront of a long-lasting confrontation with Russia. There are several indications of what the plan might be:

1) **Create a military demarcation line in Europe, like the one that has divided the Korean peninsula for 70 years,** formally demilitarized through an armistice with Russia.

2) **Put Ukraine, formally out of NATO, "under the tutelage" of Poland** which, at the official request of Kyiv, would permanently deploy its military forces there together with those of the three Baltic Republics and possibly other NATO countries.

Hence the need for "*Ukraine's recovery*", which cost is expected to be between 400 and 1,000 billion dollars. In this framework, European Union – which this year has allocated 18 billion euros to pay salaries, pensions, and

public services in Ukraine – allocates another 50 billion euros for the "*recovery*" of Ukraine, taking away other vital resources from EU countries.

The plan stems from the failure of the "*Ukrainian counter-offensive*" which, according to what they announced, was supposed to break through the Russian lines and reconquer the "*occupied territories*". The Ukrainian armed forces, financed, armed, and trained by NATO, equipped with the most modern weaponry (such as the German Leopard tanks) are suffering increasing losses. Hence the need for a new strategy.

"*An unwinnable war / Washington needs an endgame in Ukraine,*" writes Samuel Charap, an analyst at the RAND Corporation: "*A total victory on the field by either side is nearly impossible. Proper peace is impossible. However, it is possible that the two sides could settle for a Korean-style armistice line.*" This scenario is further elaborated by Anders Rasmussen, NATO secretary general at the time when it demolished the Libyan State in war and started covert operations to do the same in Syria: "*We know that Poland is very busy providing assistance specific to Ukraine. I do not exclude that Poland is even more involved in this context on a national basis and that it is followed by the Baltic states, with the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine.*"

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●▶ **Read also:** Ukraine: An "Afghanistan" in the Heart of Europe

UN experts call for end to global 'war on drugs'

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking | 23 June 2023
Source: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/06/un-experts-call-end-global-war-drugs

The international community must replace punishment with support and promote policies that respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all, UN experts* said today. Ahead of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2023, they called for transformative change in the international approach to drugs, focusing on health and other human rights and issued the following statement:

"The 'war on drugs' may be understood to a significant extent as a war on people. Its impact has been greatest on those who live in poverty, and it frequently overlaps with discrimination directed at marginalised groups, minoritiesand Indigenous Peoples. In our reporting and experience, we have found that such discriminatory impact is a common element across drug policies with regard to the widest range of human rights, including the right to personal liberty; freedom from torture, ill-treatment and forced labour; fair trial rights; the right to health, including access to essential medicines, palliative care, comprehensive drug prevention and education, drug treatment, and harm reduction; the right to adequate housing; freedom from discrimination and the right to equal treatment before the law; right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; cultural rights and freedoms of expression, religion, assembly and association.

Globally, drug control has had massive costs for the dignity, humanity and freedom of people of African descent, with reports showing that people of African descent face disproportionate and unjust law enforcement interventions, arrests and incarceration for drug-related offences. In various countries, the 'war on drugs' has been more effective as a system of racial control than as a tool to reduce drug markets. Policing interventions based on racial profiling remain widespread, whilst access to evidence-based treatment and harm reduction for people of African descent remains critically low.

Around the world, women who use drugs face significant stigma and discrimination in accessing harm reduction programmes, drug dependence treatment and basic health care. Although one in three people who use drugs are women, women constitute only one in five people in treatment. Women are also disproportionately affected by criminalisation and incarceration, with 35% of women in prison worldwide having been convicted of a drug-related offence compared to 19% of men. The causes of women's interaction with the criminal justice system in relation to drugs are complex, often linked to other factors such as poverty and coercion, and may reflect systemic gender inequality in society more broadly. Of note, most women in prison for drug related offences have little education.

Under international law, States that have not yet abolished the death penalty may only impose capital punishment for the 'most serious crimes', meaning crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing. Drug offences clearly do not meet this threshold. However, drug-related offences are still punishable by

death in over 30 countries, and human rights experts have raised concerns about evidence of its discriminatory impact on individuals belonging to minorities.

Indonesia

Everyone without exception has the right to life-saving harm reduction interventions, which are essential for the protection of the right to health of people who use drugs. However, according to UN data, only 1 in 8 people with drug dependence have access to appropriate treatment, and the coverage of harm reduction services remains very low. The situation is particularly critical for women, LGBTIQ+ persons, and other marginalised groups, for whom harm reduction and treatment services may not be adapted or respond to their specific needs. Women and LGBTIQ+ persons also face even higher levels of stigma, including self-stigma, and discrimination than men who use drugs.

As the world grows older, drug use among people over 65 has also increased. The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the health and well-being of older persons, and studies show an increased use of pain relievers, tranquillizers, and sedatives among this age group. Older drug users are also more often using the dark web, social media, and online forums to obtain illicit substances resulting in a rise of drug-related deaths among older populations.

The criminalisation of substances traditionally used by Indigenous Peoples such as the coca leaf can also result in the suppression, undermining and marginalization of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and medicine, which has wide-ranging health impacts and is rooted in discriminatory hierarchies and conceptions. Forced eradication of crops, including through the aerial spraying of highly hazardous pesticides, can cause serious harm to the environment and clean water, as well as to the health and welfare of Indigenous communities. Indigenous Peoples that might be affected by these and other drug control operations must be meaningfully consulted, and guarantees should be given that their lives, cultural practices, lands and natural resources are not violated.

Criminal laws and the punitive use of administrative and other sanctions stigmatise already marginalised populations. Criminalisation results in significant barriers to access to health services (including those for

HIV and palliative care) and in other human rights violations. As called for by the UN system Common Position on drug-related matters, drug use and possession for personal use should be decriminalised as a matter of urgency. Drug use or dependence are never a sufficient justification for detaining a person. Compulsory drug detention and rehabilitation centres need to be closed and replaced with voluntary, evidence-informed, and rights-based health and social services in the community.

In line with the theme this year, "People, the United Nations and the international community have a historical responsibility to reverse the devastation brought about by decades of a global 'war on drugs' on communities that have been marginalised and discriminated against.

As we did in 2022, we call on Member States and all UN agencies to ground their drug policy responses in international human rights law and standards. States and international bodies that provide financial or technical assistance on drug policy should ensure that these policies are gender-responsive while upholding and actively seeking to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We urge Member States and international bodies to supersede their current drug policies with ones grounded in the principles of the application of a comprehensive, restorative and reintegrative justice approach. Effective, community-based, inclusive, and preventive measures are equally important.

Now more than ever, the international community must replace punishment with support and promote policies that respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all."

ENDS

*The experts: **Priya Gopalan** (Chair), **Matthew Gillett** (Vice-Chair on Communications), **Ganna Yudkivska** (Vice-Chair on Follow-Up), **Miriam Estrada-Castillo** and **Mumba Malila**, **Working Group on Arbitrary Detention**; **Alexandra Xanthaki**, **Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights**; **Dorothy Estrada Tanck** (Chair), **Ivana Radačić** (Vice-Chair), **Elizabeth Broderick**, **Meskerem Geset Techane and Melissa Upreti**, **Working Group on discrimination against women and girls**; **Tomoya Obokata**, **Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences**; **Victor Madrigal-Borloz**, **Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity**; **Gerard Quinn**, **Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities**; **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, **Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**; **Farida Shaheed**, **Special Rapporteur on the right to education**; **Reem Alsalem**, **Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences**; **Ms. Siobhán Mullally**, **Special Rapporteur on trafficking in person**; **Ashwini K.P**, **Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism**; **David R. Boyd**, **Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment**; **José Francisco Calí Tzay**, **Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples**; **Claudia Mahler**, **Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons**; **Morris Tidball-Binz**, **Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**; **Marcos A. Orellana**, **Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes**.

*Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work voluntarily; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent of any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.*

The World's Immigration Policies Are Outdated. Here's How to Catch Up

By Justin Gest
Source: https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/29/immigration-refugee-policy-greece-shipwreck-mediterranean-europe-us/

June 29 – More than a week after a fishing boat overcrowded with asylum-seekers capsized off the Greek coastline, only 104 survivors have been found, and as many as 550 adults and 100 children are now feared dead by the United Nations' International Organization for Migration. The European commissioner for home affairs, Ylva Johansson, said that the sinking may be the "worst tragedy ever" in the Mediterranean Sea, also warning that such journeys have increased sevenfold compared to last year.

The news cast a shadow over World Refugee Day on June 20, which honors people forced to flee their homes and commemorates the anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the 1951 Refugee Convention—the birth of the modern humanitarian migration system. For more than 70 years, this system has divided immigration governance into two tracks: one for voluntary migrants and another for forced migrants. But this dichotomy seems less and less suited for today's reality. For all the complexity of global immigration policy—dozens of visa types per country, each

regulated by obscure requirements—this split still underpins most legal frameworks. Voluntary migrants are those who move to advance their career and socioeconomic status on labor visas, join relatives on family visas, enroll in an educational program on student visas, or invest in a new market on entrepreneur visas. Meanwhile, forced migrants move because their lives are endangered; persecution qualifies them for admission and refuge under international law.

The nature of global migration today is changing, and policy is struggling to keep up. **The many people seeking to cross the borders of the United States or the European Union are neither voluntary migrants nor entitled to refuge.** They are forced migrants who don't qualify for refugee status. Because there are few legal pathways for them to enter destination states, borders are becoming harder to control, reactionary nativism is rising, and tragedies such as last week's shipwreck in the Mediterranean are becoming more likely. It doesn't have to be this way.

International regulations governing refugee admissions are effectively unchanged from 1951, when U.N. members ratified rules that granted entry to safe third countries to anyone who credibly faces oppression and fears for their life in their country of origin. These rules were designed with the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust fresh in mind, and receiving governments deliberately circumscribed their application to people who were persecuted on the basis of their political beliefs, religion, identity, or social class. However, international law has not been adapted to address modern threats such as gang or militia violence, or the pervasive loss of arable or habitable land due to climate change. Others face equal pressure from an economic collapse pushing their families to the edge of starvation. **There is little doubt that many of the people trekking across the Sonoran Desert or the Mediterranean Sea—predominantly coming from Central America, Western Asia, or sub-Saharan Africa—are forced to migrate.** These problems are not new. But thanks to more accessible transportation, the communication of mobility opportunities via the internet, and the intensification of these threats, migrants that may have once only reached neighboring countries in the global south are now able to reach North America or Europe in greater numbers than before.

These families and individuals cannot return to their countries of origin, but they usually do not qualify for asylum either. That is why so many nonrefugee forced migrants try again after being denied at the border or interdicted at sea. An increasing number of people are entering the United States and the EU without authorization or filing asylum claims that grant years of parole while they wait to be adjudicated, even if they are unlikely to be approved. The ambiguous status of these migrants has allowed nativist political leaders to label asylum-seekers as exploitative when they are simply seeking refuge in countries that do not recognize the threats they are fleeing.

To be sure, most nonrefugee forced migrants are also seeking work or may intend to join relatives in specific destination countries. But these mixed motivations do not change their fundamental vulnerability, just as career goals and a desire to reunite with family do not change the humanitarian status of refugees who flee persecution. Even though immigration laws may classify people according to a single purpose for migrating, no one is so singular in their needs.

The future order and stability of global borders depends on how countries respond to this complicated policy challenge. Most governments are struggling because they are applying yesterday's laws to address modern trends in human mobility. But there are two simple shifts that governments can make now to adjust current systems to the new realities of global migration.

First, existing voluntary migration programs can begin to account for new forms of humanitarian vulnerability. Most labor migration programs currently evaluate immigration applicants on the basis of skills, a job offer, or credentials. Similarly, applicants for family reunification are evaluated on their relationship to their sponsor. But these programs could take the vulnerability of applicants into account in their decision-making. Many people who wish to reunify with relatives or who are willing and able to work in industries with labor shortages are also fleeing humanitarian emergencies.

Countries with **points-based** systems, such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, evaluate applicants on a range of criteria and factor in attributes such as language proficiency and previous visits. These states could begin favoring those in vulnerable circumstances when dealing with similarly situated applicants. Other countries could likewise take circumstances into account in applications for temporary labor programs or family unification visas—for example, considering distant relatives, who are normally not prioritized but could be in vulnerable situations. Such incremental shifts to existing policies would not require a policy overhaul. They would also not open the door indiscriminately, allowing governments to avoid public backlash.

Justin Gest is a professor at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.
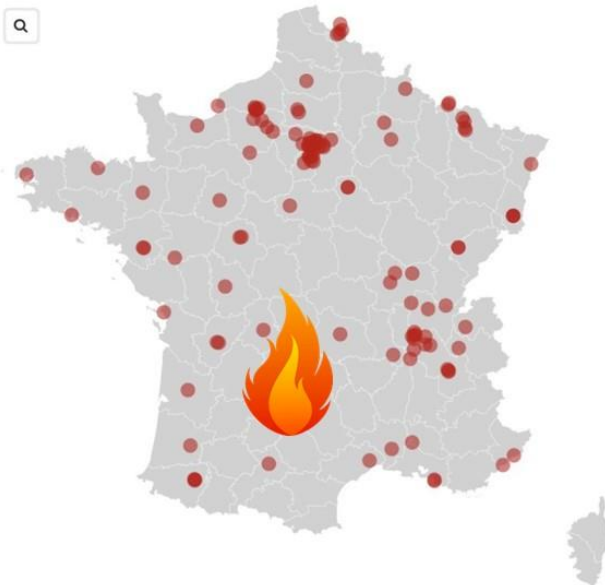
EDITOR'S COMMENT: An article that started well but ended with weak proposals and nothing new to consider. I seriously Doubt about the working capabilities of these people; haven't seen that in those flooding Greece with minor exceptions. In addition, nobody in EU blames African governments for the situation. Nobody!
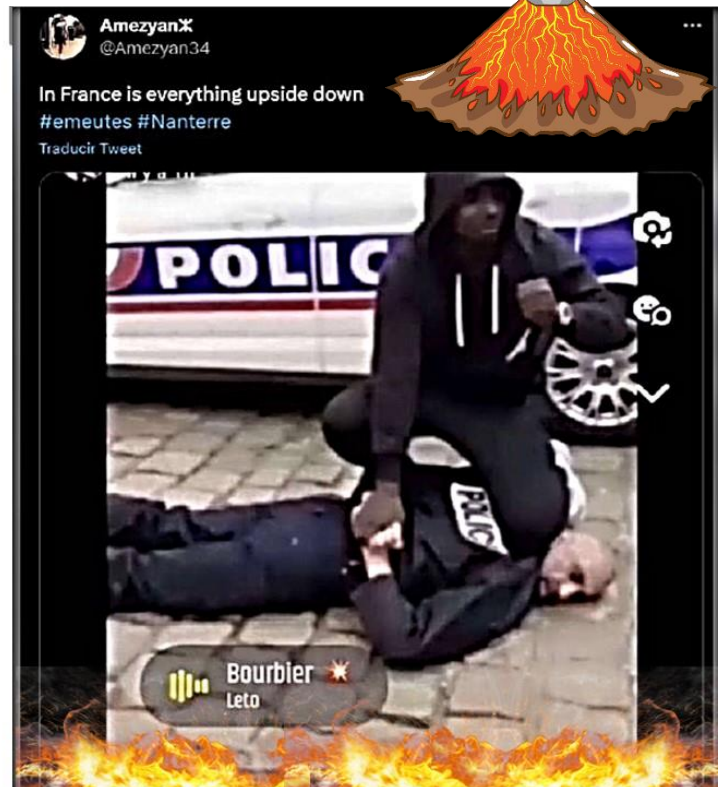
What is going on in France?

Carte des violences urbaines dans la nuit du 29 au 30 juin

Recensement non exhaustif

Source: Compilation à partir de la presse régionale, de vidéos amateurs, AFP — franceinfo:

Amezyan✖
@Amezyan34

In France is everything upside down
#emeutes #Nanterre
Traducir Tweet

POLIC...

Bourbier ✳
Leto

France has been rocked by a wave of protests after a 17-year-old youth was shot by police near Paris sparking a ban on demonstrations in some cities, travel warnings and reigniting a debate on over-policing in marginalized communities. Scenes emerged of people setting fires to vehicles and climbing onto buildings with smashed windows, while riot police officers fiercely clashed with demonstrators. Historic buildings in France that survived bombardment in WW2 cannot survive the cultural "enrichment" of open borders. Most people participating in the riots are Algerians and Africans of young age (30%: 14-17yo), mostly living in the "red" districts of Paris. Fears that unrest will expand in Belgium and The Netherlands.

2021 – Military group warns President Macron that the survival of France is at risk

Source: https://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20210510-military-group-warns-president-macron-that-the-survival-of-france-is-at-risk

May 2021 – A group of serving French soldiers has published an open letter in a conservative magazine warning President Emmanuel Macron that the "survival" of France is at stake because he has made "concessions" to Islamism.

The letter, published in the conservative *Valeurs Actuelles* magazine, echoes the tone of a similar warning printed in the same magazine last month. The earlier missive also predicted that civil conflict was brewing.

The previous letter, signed by a handful of officers and some 20 semi-retired generals, sparked a furore in France with the prime minister calling it an unacceptable interference, and France's top general vowing those behind it would be punished.

It is not clear how many people are behind the current letter or what their ranks are. In contrast to the previous letter, this one could also be signed by the general public.

"We are not talking about extending your mandates or conquering others. We are talking about the survival of our country, the survival of your country," said the letter, which was addressed to President Macron and his cabinet.

'Civil war is brewing in France . . .'

The authors describe themselves as serving soldiers from the younger generation of the military, a so-called "generation of fire" that has seen active service.

"They have offered their lives to destroy the Islamism to which you have made concessions on our soil."

The signatories added they had also served in the security operation launched after a wave of attacks in 2015. They observed that for some religious communities "France means nothing but an object of sarcasm, contempt or even hatred."

The letter continues: "If a civil war breaks out, the military will maintain order on its own soil... civil war is brewing in France and you know it perfectly well."

'A failure of honour and duty to the army'

The letter comes ahead of next year's polls where Macron's main challenger is expected to be far-right leader Marine Le Pen.

Prime Minister Jean Castex had labelled the rare intervention in politics by military figures in last month's letter "an initiative against all of our republican principles, of honour and the duty of the army".

France's armed forces chief of staff General François Lecointre said those who signed the first document will face punishments ranging from forced retirement to disciplinary action.

Jim Ferguson ✔
@JimFergusonUK

There are unconfirmed reports that certain senior and serving French Military commanders have delivered an ultimatum to #Macron. Restore order within 48 hours or they will. The picture is of retired and highly respected Général Pierre de Villiers a French Aristocrat. A decorated and respected General who Macron publicly humiliated in a disagreement over defence cuts. There are no further updates at this time. #RiotsFrance #Macron #France #WEF2030Agenda

3:32 AM · Jul 2, 2023 · **1.8M** Views

This is a standard procedure. Illegal immigrants shortly before arriving on the Greek shores simply tear up their papers, to declare fake information about themselves at the "Authorities" and be taken to the inland for permanent settlement.

Spirosthe1st
@spirosthe1st

Όχι δεν σκίζουν τα πτυχία τους,τα χαρτιά τους σκίζουν...Λες και θα τους τα ζητήσει κανένας... 😀

Translate Tweet

3:25 PM · Jul 1, 2023 · **7,157** Views

Albanian provocations in the US

NGO "Albanian Roots", which was created to strengthen the Albanian-American community in the USA is the organizer of the Albanian Parade held again this year (June 10, 2023) in New York. This year they even had police officers (of Albanian origin) hold and march with a banner that showed a map of Albania that included GREEK Epirus and Corfu, all the way to the city of Preveza!

Did you know?

There was once a Newfoundland Dog called Gander. He was a big black dog, and he was given to the army by a family after he raised a paw to a child and scratched her.

Gander was loyal and the soldiers loved him.

On December 7th, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and eight hours later, Japanese troops poured across the border in violation of international law since Japan had not declared war against the British Empire. They engaged British, Indian, and Canadian units, and alongside the Canadians was Gander.

The large dog charged and tackled any Japanese soldier who got too close to his Canadians troops. "He growled and ran at the enemy soldiers, biting at their heels," recalled Rifleman Reginald Law. Since most of the fighting occurred at night, Gander's black coat made him all but invisible, and instead of shooting the enormous dog, the Japanese tore off to avoid the "beast". When Japanese soldiers interrogated Canadian prisoners of war, they asked about the "Black Beast," suspicious that Allies were training vicious animals for battle. During the Battle of Lye Mun, a grenade was thrown by the Japanese which fell in the middle of a group of injured Canadian soldiers. Everyone froze. There was a flash of black fur as Gander retrieved the grenade and ran off with it saving the injured soldiers. It will never be known if Gander knew he was sacrificing himself, but he was buried with full military honors and rightly so. He saved the lives of 7 soldiers - a true hero who was awarded the Dicken Medal - the highest honor which can be awarded to an animal.

Welcome to the sixth edition of *Space Threat Assessment* by the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). This resource for policymakers and the public leverages open-source information to assess key developments in foreign counterspace weapons. Drawing on six years of collected data and analyses, this series describes trends in the development, testing, and use of

counterspace weapons and enables readers to develop a deeper understanding of threats to U.S. national security interests in space. The past year was dominated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where space capabilities, including commercial satellites, played a highly visible and compelling role in Ukraine's resistance to the invasion. Thus, this year's featured analysis provides an in-depth look at Russia's battlefield employment of counterspace weapons. As space capabilities continue to demonstrate their utility, from peacetime to conflict, it should come as no surprise that adversaries seek to block their use.

This year's assessment covers the growing space and counterspace capabilities of China, Russia, India, Iran, North Korea, and other nations.

Kari A. Bingen is the director of the Aerospace Security Project and a senior fellow in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
Kaitlyn Johnson is deputy director and fellow of the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.
Makena Young is an associate fellow with the Aerospace Security Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Are there limits to patience?

Spriter Team
@SpriterTeam

"I know what kind of weapons and how many are in warehouses in each country. And I know in what amount each EU country can help Ukraine. I corrected them several times when they claimed that they did not have weapons and proved that there was an alternative. One of the prime ministers at a meeting once he told me: you could be our defense minister - you know very well what (weapons) we have and in which warehouses they are all located." - President 🇺🇦 Vladimir Zelenski.

0:01 / 0:25   @WEUKRAINETV

11:19 AM · Jul 2, 2023 · **1M** Views

170,000,000,000 €

"As of February 2022, partners have allocated approximately 170 billion euros to Kyiv, this amount includes military, economic and humanitarian aid from foreign governments, as well as international financial institutions," the ministry's website said in a statement. It is noted that, according to the Ukraine Support Tracker system, 40 countries have become donors to Ukraine, as well as European institutions, the IMF and the World Bank. In particular, the European Union allocated almost 62 billion euros, the aid from the USA amounted to 71 billion. The list of donor countries also includes the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey and India. Of these, Ukraine received an additional 23 billion euros. Another nearly €13 billion was provided by international financial institutions.

Europe: The La La Land of Immigration

By Giulio Meotti
Source: https://www.meforum.org/64583/europe-the-la-la-land-of-immigration

June 28 – "Free Derry" is a famous area that declared itself "autonomous" in Northern Ireland's second city between 1969 and 1972. The term originates from the writing painted on the wall of a building: "You are now entering Free Derry". The name derives from its status as a "closed" area (no-go area) to British forces (British and Protestants called it Londonderry).

Who would have thought, fifty years later, that there would be other "no-go areas" in Europe?

In Stockholm, seven people were killed in one day over one recent weekend: a young man in Jordbro; two in Solna; two boys, a 65-year-old woman and a 45-year-old man at the Farsta metro station. There have been 160 shootings in Sweden so far this year. One of the most peaceful countries in the world - until 2015 - today is at war. With itself.

And to think that, before the migrant crisis, the American liberal media had headlines: "Sweden has the answer to America's gun problem." Stockholm, in fact, has one of the most restrictive gun laws in the world or, in the words of Vox, "only responsible people can have them." Sweden's problem is that it hasn't let in too many "responsible people."

Linda Staaf, head of the Swedish police intelligence service, tells the *Observer*: "It is not normal to see this type of explosion in a country without war."

"Sweden is in an extremely grave situation," Justice Minister Gunnar Strömmer said this week, referring to the surge in violence. "The police found 21 blank cartridges, which means 21 shots were fired. It could have been worse. I would say that it is domestic terrorism," said Strömmer.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson has just taken pen and paper to write an article decreeing: "Mass immigration doesn't work." It decrees the end of the EU immigration policy, of which Sweden had been the forerunner, avant-garde, La La Land.

For Europe, everything is a musical.

Now there is a threat, say the police, "to the whole of society," not just to those who die. There are 30,000 criminal gang members in the country. A crazy number for a country of just 10 million inhabitants.

But the faults are not only of the usual left. Even supposedly "moderate" premier Carl Bildt boasted that Sweden was a "humanitarian superpower" when it welcomed 163,000 migrants in 2015 alone, a record per capita in Europe. The government also organized a conference on migration policy entitled *Sverige tillsammans* (Sweden together) which was attended by the King, Queen, and the political establishment.

You know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions...

Today Farsta, where one of the most horrific shootings took place that violent weekend, is included in the list of 61 "vulnerable areas," a politically correct designation to describe Sweden's Islamised districts. The Swedish police define one of these "no go areas" as follows: "Parallel social structures; extremism, such as systematic violations of religious freedom; fundamentalist influence limiting people's freedoms and rights; people leaving to participate in fighting in conflict zones; a high concentration of criminals. The situation is considered urgent."

"In Sweden there are 60 'risk areas,'" Swedish journalist Paulina Neuding tells the *Spectator.* Like Alby, a suburb of Stockholm known as "little Baghdad," where only one in ten inhabitants is Swedish.

The police released a report, Utsatta områden ("vulnerable areas"). 556,000 people live there, or 5.4 percent of the total Swedish population, according to the report. "Swedish democracy could be threatened if the country fails to control violence and allow parallel societies to develop," police chief Anders Thornberg warned in the *Financial Times.*

A writer in *Dagens Nyheter recently* explained:

"When my train stops in Farsta, there is silence on the platform. The evening papers say the subway has been closed so the culprits cannot escape. A line of lemmings starts walking back towards Farsta. All eyes

on their phones. Nobody says anything. Silence is more unpleasant than sirens. Since I was on parental leave with my second daughter, I've always had a tourniquet and a first aid kit in the stroller. Last year alone we had 20 shootings in Farsta. A friend has moved to Johannesburg with her daughter. One of the most violent cities in the world. But she says there are more shoot-outs in Farsta than in South Africa."

Twenty years ago gun crime was virtually unknown in Sweden, the country fabled by all Western socialists, Bernie Sanders and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, while this year there were 160 shootings in five months, in which 53 people were killed or injured and 20 died.

If it didn't work in Derry between Catholics and Protestants, why should this monument to naïveté work between post-Christians and Muslims in Sweden?

Today, one in five Swedish citizens was born outside Sweden and three quarters of those born abroad were born outside the EU.

The Islamic Ummah thrives across open borders in Europe, thanks to the generosity of European social systems, occupies territories place by place which become no-go zones, and street gangs and organized crime protect the no-go zones. High birth rates ensure the longevity and expandability of these areas. That's how we ended up in today's Sweden.

In just a few decades, Sweden has caught up with the United States as the world leader in terms of multi-ethnic population, but with all that entails in the Swedish case having large numbers of people from cultures less compatible with the West.

"In 45 years, ethnic Swedes will be a minority in Sweden," according to a report by Kyösti Tarvainen, (professor at Aalto University in Helsinki). According to the same report, Muslims will by then be in the majority in Sweden.

The question is whether Sweden - which gave the world King Gustavus Adolphus, Linnaeus, the Bergmans, Strindbergs, Raoul Wallenberg, but also the Annecy playground bomber - can still step back from the precipice it faced. And the whole of Europe with them.

The writing "You are now entering Free Derry" is also there now, in memory of the division between two religious and national confessions that resulted in Bloody Sunday. A city divided like, de facto, Malmö, Sweden's third largest city, with the large district of Rosengaard, only beautiful in its name ("the rose garden"). This is where footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic was born, but where the new police station is fortified because the old building has been riddled with bullets, whose main school has been closed due to social tension and where the UPS delivery service refuses to operate.

Strange posters have appeared: "In 2030 we take over."

Giulio Meotti, Cultural Editor for *Il Foglio*, is an Italian journalist and author and a Middle East Forum Writing Fellow.

Sharp Increase in Application for Asylum to EU Countries

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230705-sharp-increase-in-application-for-asylum-to-eu-countries

July 05 – The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has published its annual flagship Asylum Report. By bringing together input from Civil Society, Member States' national authorities and independent judiciaries, as well as key statistical data from the EUAA Early warning and Preparedness System (EPS) and Eurostat, it aims to provide a balanced update on the asylum situation in Europe. Following the release of provisional data earlier this year, the EUAA has published its Asylum Report 2023. In it, the Agency reports that EU+ countries received around 996 000 asylum applications in 2022, a 53 percent increase over 2021.

With contributions received from a record 76 organizations representing a cross-section of society, and following consultations with the UNHCR and the European Commission, the report aims to contribute to European public discourse on international protection. It cites over 1 000 sources and combines both qualitative analyses and quantitative data in order to provide an authoritative resource for both practitioners and policy makers, amongst others. For the first time, this year's Report also offers an overview of the Agency's own activities in 2022, due to the increasingly important role the EUAA now plays in the protection landscape of Europe. Furthermore, also reflecting the Agency's expanding operational footprint (14 operations in EU+ countries in 2022), the Report evaluates the results of some of these. This year also brings new interactive web and digital features, through which stakeholders can retrieve information of interest. This is aimed at ensuring that while the Report contains an unprecedented amount of information, it can be identified and consulted in a user-friendly way.

Significant Pressure on National Systems

Around 70 percent of applications in 2022 were lodged in five receiving countries, including Germany (244 000), France (156 000), Spain (118 000), Austria (109 000), and Italy (84 000). **As in previous years, the top countries of origin were Syria (138 000)**

and Afghanistan (132 000), followed by Türkiye (58 000), Venezuela (51 000) and Colombia (43 000). In 2022, EU+ countries took around 646 000 decisions on applications at first instance, the most since 2017. Of the 252 000 positive decisions, around 59 percent granted refugee status and 41 percent provided subsidiary protection. The recognition rate stood at 39 percent, the highest since 2017, meaning that around 2-in-5 applications were successful. Taken together, Germany (31 percent), France (20 percent), Spain (13 percent), Italy (8 percent), Austria (6 percent) and Greece (6 percent) issued over four-fifths of all decisions. However, despite the increased pace in decision-taking in 2022, because of the surge in applications linked to conflict, instability, and food insecurity in many regions of origin, the number of pending decisions rose to 899 000 in 2022.

EU Response to Provide Protection
With almost 1 million asylum seekers and about 4 million beneficiaries of temporary protection in 2022, EU+ countries, supported by the EU's Institutions and Agencies, reacted swiftly to tackle a dynamic and challenging situation.
Furthermore, in 2022 and early 2023, European policymakers inched ever closer to agreeing on the comprehensive reforms proposed in the Pact on Migration and Asylum, including an agreement by Member States on two important legislative proposals in June 2023. If the Pact is adopted following negotiations with the European Parliament, the EUAA will need to be equipped with the resources – both financial and in terms of personnel – given the critical role it will play in implementing the Pact.

> **EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Is there a war in Turkey, Venezuela, Colombia, and Afghanistan? Sorry, I didn't know!

ATTENTION!

Do **NOT** choose the Island of **Santorini** (Greece) for your 2023 Summer vacation! Locals brutally whip their donkeys in the face!

German Defense Companies Could Be Europe's Arsenal of Democracy

By Franz-Stefan Gady
Source: https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/06/germany-bundeswehr-defense-industry-zeitenwende-weapons-arms-exports-rheinmetall-leopard-tanks-drones/

July 06 – More than a decade ago, the German government made the deliberate decision to kill the ability of the Bundeswehr, Germany's military, to fight a conventional land war in Europe and strip it of the equipment, manpower, and resources to do so. In 1990, as the Cold War was ending, the then-West German Bundeswehr alone was still able to field 215 combat battalions in a high state of readiness. Today, Germany has around 34 battalions, and the word "combat" is a bit of a misnomer. They are at such a low state of military readiness

that when the 10th Tank Division conducted an exercise late last year, its entire deployed fleet of 18 Puma infantry fighting vehicles broke down. The decrepit state of the Bundeswehr now stands in the way of the German government's stated intention to play a greater role in European security and deterrence against future Russian aggression. Berlin's offer last month to permanently deploy a full combat brigade in Lithuania may reflect the beginnings of a shift in German strategic culture, but it is unclear whether the Bundeswehr can pull even this task off. It took the German military two years of preparation for one such brigade just to be ready for exercises in Norway in 2019, when Germany led NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, the alliance's first responder to any military crisis. Germany's pledge in 2022 to be able to deploy an entire division, or up to 30,000 soldiers, for NATO's territorial defense by 2025 also remains doubtful. Even stripping other Bundeswehr units of equipment will likely be insufficient to adequately outfit an entire division. There is, however, one bit of good news that might help Germany overcome this epic security debacle. While Germany just about killed the Bundeswehr, it did not kill the German defense industry. One of the world's largest and most technologically advanced, Germany's defense sector would have the products, technology, and manufacturing know-how to meet many of the Bundeswehr's modernization demands over the coming decades.

Franz-Stefan Gady is a senior fellow for cyber power and future conflict at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Do not let Germany resurrect its military ambitions! Two World Wars are more than enough!

Perhaps it is time to go …

Anyone who believes that Ankara will comply with the recommendations of the Americans not to use the requested F-16 fighters in violations of the Greek national airspace and in general in hostile actions against Greece is naive, to say the least.

SWEDISH PM 'VERY HAPPY' AFTER TURKEY GIVES GREEN LIGHT FOR NATO BID …

Turkish President Erdogan says on Greece that the aim is to gain more friends rather than gaining more enemies. "We have never used our F-16s against Greece and we don't plan to use them against Greece in the future."

YEAR MONTH	ICAO VIOLATIONS	VIOLATIONS OF NATION AIRSPACE	ARMED FORMATIONS	DOGFIGHTS	FLYING OVER NATION LAND	WARPLANES (TOTAL)
2022	ΠΑΡΑΒΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΕΚ (ICAO)	ΠΑΡΑΒΙΑΣΕΙΣ ΕΕΧ	ΟΠΛΙΣΜΕΝΟΙ ΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΙ	ΕΜΠΛΟΚΕΣ	ΥΠΕΡΠΤΗΣΗ ΕΘΝΙΚΟΥ ΕΔΑΦΟΥΣ	ΣΥΝΟΛΟ ΑΕΡΟΣΚΑΦΩΝ
ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΟΣ	110	380	14	17	18	157
ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΣ	138	446	21	22	12	170
ΜΑΡΤΙΟΣ	126	512	10	15	5	165
ΑΠΡΙΛΙΟΣ	248	1041	25	27	85	242
ΜΑΙΟΣ	199	817	12	13	7	244
ΙΟΥΝΙΟΣ	159	760	11	17	9	209
ΙΟΥΛΙΟΣ	158	778	21	25	2	198
ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ	199	1126	30	35	18	250
ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ	241	1802	15	16	28	259
ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΣ	263	1220	32	36	16	294
ΝΟΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ	206	1223	37	42	16	265
ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ	239	1153	54	68	18	305
TOTAL	**2286**	**11256**	**282**	**333**	**234**	**2758**
2023	ΠΑΡΑΒΑΣΕΙΣ ΚΕΚ (ICAO)	ΠΑΡΑΒΙΑΣΕΙΣ ΕΕΧ	ΟΠΛΙΣΜΕΝΟΙ ΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΙ	ΕΜΠΛΟΚΕΣ	ΥΠΕΡΠΤΗΣΗ ΕΘΝΙΚΟΥ ΕΔΑΦΟΥΣ	ΣΥΝΟΛΟ ΑΕΡΟΣΚΑΦΩΝ
ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΟΣ	237	978	65	74	21	321
ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΣ	46	163	9	14	0	58
ΜΑΡΤΙΟΣ	3	23	0	0	0	3
ΑΠΡΙΛΙΟΣ	0	0	0	0	0	0
ΜΑΙΟΣ	3	0	0	0	0	2
ΙΟΥΝΙΟΣ	6	0	0	0	0	6
ΙΟΥΛΙΟΣ						
ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ						
ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ						
ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΣ						
ΝΟΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ						
ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΣ						
TOTAL	**295**	**1164**	**74**	**88**	**21**	**390**

Turkish Air Force violations – years 2022 & 2023

Boycott Faeroe Islands (DK)

S A V A G E S

Skam Danmark!

Flying hope!
Thank you!

383 MEEA
CL-415

Attika, Greece wildfires | July 2023

Florence Bergeaud-Blackler on the Muslim-Led Riots That Left France in Flames

By Marilyn Stern
Source: https://www.meforum.org/64605/florence-bergeaud-blackler-on-the-muslim-led

July 03 – Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, anthropologist, and researcher of Islamic norms in a secular context, is author of *Le Frérisme et ses réseaux, l'enquête* (*The Brotherhood and Its Networks, a Survey*). In the book, she investigates the ideology, strategy, and doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and its networks in Europe. Bergeaud-Blackler spoke to a July 3rd Middle East Forum Webinar (video) about the Muslim-led riots currently raging across France. The following is a summary of her comments:

After police at a traffic stop shot and killed Nahel Merzouk, a seventeen-year-old North African, riots erupted across France when the video of the incident was streamed on social media. Leftist French groups denounced the police for committing a "political assassination" because of Merzouk's race—a narrative echoing the riots in the U.S. following George Floyd's death during an encounter with police. That the two cases "have little in common" was disregarded in the heat of the French rioters' demand for justice. Unlike George Floyd, Merzouk was driving a car not his own and without a license, and he had recklessly endangered lives before the police stopped him. Although the policeman who allegedly pulled the trigger was jailed, reactions to the video quickly spread out of control. Both the Floyd and Merzouk cases were presented by leftist groups as examples of "political assassination by a police force that kills racialized and underprivileged young people."

A leftist party in parliament that had garnered considerable support from the *banlieues,* the French suburbs of Paris that are heavily populated by Muslim minorities, did nothing to calm the unrest, and another leftist group called for revenge. These two groups coalesced with Muslims angered over purported police harassment of largely Muslim areas plagued by gang activity, drug trafficking, and violence. The riots served as both an advantage and disadvantage for the Islamists, in particular the MB, which seeks to turn the *ummah* (Muslim nation) into a "cultural, economic, and political force." The advantage is that the riots are proof of the failure of Muslims to assimilate into the secular culture of France, but the disadvantage is that the MB wants the next generation of Muslim youth to "form an elite rather than to be 'proletarianized.'"

The Strategy for Islamic Action Outside the Islamic World, a document published in Qatar in 2000 and signed by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), was inspired by the French branch of the MB. The document outlines measures to be taken regarding Muslim education in a non-Muslim society. The MB eschews assimilation, prioritizes "Islamic ethics" in lieu of the West's secular values, and instructs Muslims to act in accordance with Sharia based on "ordering the good and prohibiting the evil." Since the promotion of secularism in national education is seen by most French as a way of preserving national unity and avoiding religious strife, the MB's strategy is rendered "inadmissible" in France. The French prefer religious practice to be exercised in the private sphere, with worn symbols permitted, provided they do not infringe on public security. The MB, however, demands tolerance for their intolerance of the French ideal of assimilating young Muslims for the public good. This is the method used to subvert the principle of tolerance. Bergeaud-Blackler describes the MB method as Frerisme—"Brotherism." This doctrine, which is based on the teachings of the MB's founder, Hassan al-Banna, and the Hindu-Pakistani Abdul A'la Maududi, was modernized by Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Brotherism is a transnational movement whose ultimate objective is global domination and whose initial step is making non-Muslim countries "Sharia compatible." The concept is a "system of action" that marshals the various theological and legal components and schools of Sunni Islam, i.e., Wahhabi, jihadi, Sufi, and liberal, and moves from a middle position to "fulfill the ultimate prophecy of the establishment of the caliphate on Earth." The grandiose nature of the MB's mission is not farfetched when considering its infiltration of society in public institutions, education, universities, health, justice, police, and private enterprises, where the MB exerts influence in a methodical and concealed manner. Its aim is to "modify their DNA to make them Sharia compatible" by advancing the MB's directive within the "framework of democratic laws." Influence is exerted through cultural and economic pathways because the political means are not currently within its control. The MB exercises influence over mosques where sermons introduce a new "formula" which implores Muslim women to wear the hijab (veil), appeals to all Muslims to eat halal food, and ascribes to Sharia practices a source of Islamic pride. Commenting on the riots, a recent video by a French imam (preacher) endorsed the role of the mosque to function as mediators. The imam said that promoting Islamic cultural and religious associations will prevent violence by young Muslims. Having researched the issue for three decades, Bergeaud-Blackler does not consider Islam itself to be irretrievably fundamentalist. It was possible to be a Muslim by self-definition without having to wear the hijab or eat halal. It was even acceptable for Muslims
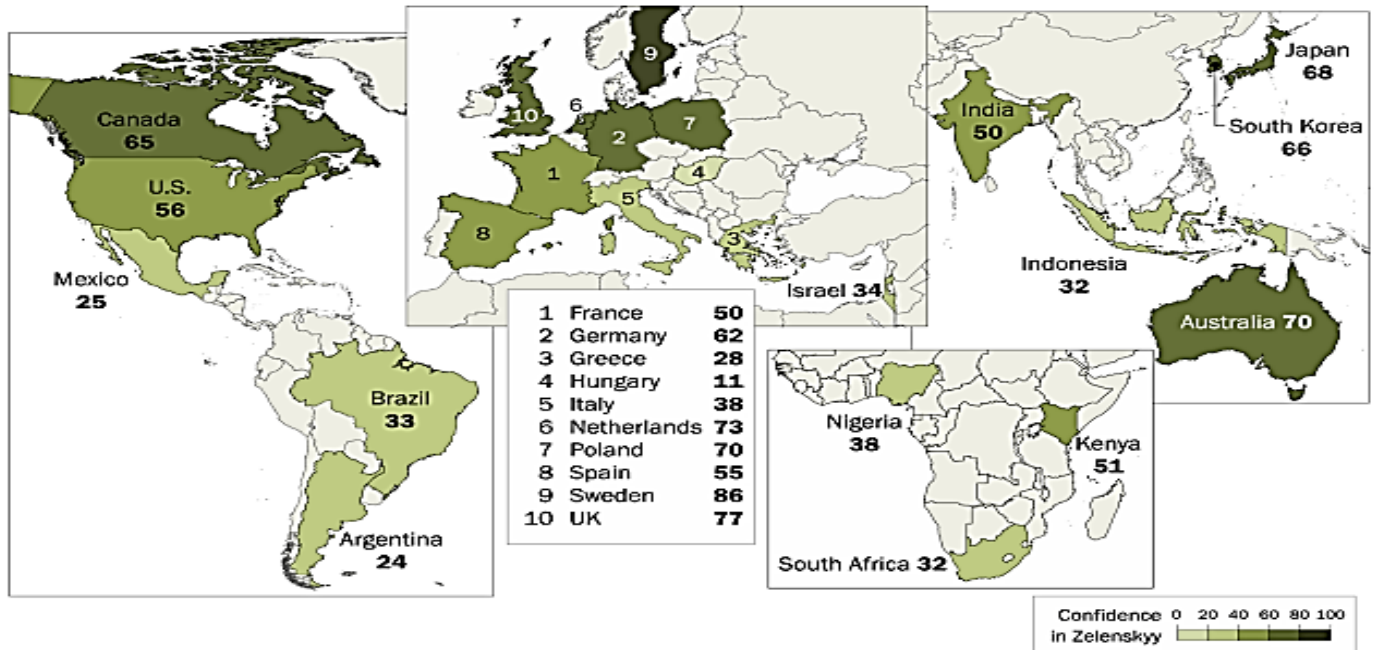
to proclaim they were no longer Muslim. That is no longer the case today because a Muslim would have to hide such a sentiment or risk inviting "trouble." Today, sixty-five percent of young French Muslims consider Sharia law more important than civil law. Islamists are increasing pressure on schoolteachers to reintroduce the hijab, prohibited since 2004. Nearly sixty percent of secondary schoolteachers censor themselves, purging sections of their lesson plans deemed incompatible with Sharia law. The MB has infiltrated Europe's network of anti-racist non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and is promoting "positive discrimination" in these groups. This concept stipulates that Muslims deserve special rights and pushes an unproven narrative that Western European democracy seeks to "dehumanize" Muslims. Strangely, the European Union (EU) rejects MB fundamentalism yet continues to further the idea that the state is a purveyor of Islamophobia despite the lack of evidence to support it. There are between eight and ten million Muslims among the overall French population of sixty-eight million. Many Muslims have assimilated in France, and a growing prosperous middle class is represented in all sectors of public institutions, private enterprise, and political parties. The existence of anti-Muslim racism, especially during the 1970s, stemmed from historical reasons when there were tensions between France and Algeria, but not to religious conflict. The concept of Islamophobia started to gain traction on social media in the mid-2000's. The MB relies upon the fallacy of "structural" Islamophobia as "the main instrument for the propagation of Brotherism." Containing the MB's influence in France's Muslim community is unrealistic because the MB has "infused" French institutions with the Brotherism ideology while staying within the law and exploiting the West's freedom of expression. The way to repel the MB's goal of making secular French society Sharia compatible is to unambiguously identify the MB's modus operandi—destroying democracy by incrementally introducing an incompatible Islamic theocracy. The MB's ideological war to transform France's secular society into one that is Sharia compatible can be understood with what Bergeaud-Blackler dubbed the V.I.P.—a vision, an identity, and a plan. This ideological war can only be fought with a clear-eyed understanding and acceptance in the secular mind that the MB will not be deterred because it takes the long view. The Islamists persist in their efforts to remove the law against the hijab in schools and have tried to pass a law allowing it in sports, even though seventy-seven percent of the French people do not support it. If the West does not find the motivation and passion to defend secularism and democratic values, the Islamists will try "again, again, again." The riots are a wake-up call—a warning that unrest is not just caused by social and economic problems. Rather, it is a religious problem that secular people ignore for fear of conflating Islam with Islamism. The solution lies in recognizing the difference between the two and taking a firm stand against the latter. The French mentality is slowly changing because French society has reached a tipping point. Accordingly, the secularists reject being tarred as "extreme right or fascist or Nazi" for saying "no" to Islamism and the MB project of a Sharia-compliant France. The solution is for all political parties to work together as democrats against theocracy.

Marilyn Stern is communications coordinator at the Middle East Forum.

Views of Zelenskyy around the world

*% who say they have **confidence** in Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to do the right thing regarding world affairs*

#	Country	
1	France	50
2	Germany	62
3	Greece	28
4	Hungary	11
5	Italy	38
6	Netherlands	73
7	Poland	70
8	Spain	55
9	Sweden	86
10	UK	77

Canada 65
U.S. 56
Mexico 25
Brazil 33
Argentina 24
India 50
Japan 68
South Korea 66
Indonesia 32
Australia 70
Israel 34
Nigeria 38
Kenya 51
South Africa 32

Confidence in Zelenskyy 0 20 40 60 80 100

Source: Spring 2023 Global Attitudes Survey. Q15f.
"Large Shares See Russia and Putin in Negative Light, While Views of Zelenskyy More Mixed"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Enjoy German public swimming pools ...

After repeated violence ([Columbiabad](#)) in Berlin's open-air swimming pools by legal and illegal immigrants, operators and the state government rely on stricter security measures. As of this Saturday (July 15), entry

to the pools will only be possible with an ID card, as announced by the Berliner Bäder-Betriebe (BBB) on Friday. In addition to their identity card, visitors may show their driving license or a student ID. In order to avoid overcrowded pools, admission stops should be made much earlier than before and security staff should be increased, the statement added.

Tunisia says undocumented migrants in the country received $1 billion this year

By Tarek Amara
Source: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/illegal-migrants-tunisia-received-1-bln-african-countries-during-six-months-2023-07-14/

July 15 – Undocumented sub-Saharan African migrants in Tunisia received three billion dinars (about $1 billion) in remittances from their countries during the first half of 2023, an official from the national security council said in a meeting late on Friday.

President Kais Saied, who chaired the meeting, said, "This figure is shocking and indicates that Tunisia is being targeted."

Saied denounced this year undocumented sub-Saharan African immigration to his country, saying in comments criticised by rights groups that it was aimed at changing Tunisia's demographic make-up.

The amount of the announced transfers for undocumented migrants is higher than revenues of the vital tourism industry in Tunisia during the first half of the year, which amounted to 2.2 billion dinars.

Thousands of undocumented migrants have flocked to coastal city of Sfax in recent months with the goal of setting off for Europe in boats run by human traffickers, leading to an unprecedented migration crisis for Tunisia.

Tunisia has removed hundreds of the migrants this month to a desolate area along the border, following days of violence in Sfax between residents and migrants.

Under pressure from international and local rights groups that accused the authorities of putting the lives of migrants in danger, the government moved them to shelters in two towns this week.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: This is VERY serious! Either they want to get rid of the poor from their countries or there is a specific plan against Europe.

Clashes and crowds: protests, riots, and other mass gathering events in North America 2021–2022

By D. Tin, L. Cheng, R. Hata, et al.
Public Health | Volume 221, August 2023, Pages 166-169
Source: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S00333506230021111?via%3Dihub

Abstract

Objective
This study aimed to provide an overview of the scope and challenges of historic events and help better prepare emergency healthcare services for future similar mass gathering events.

Study design
This was a retrospective descriptive analysis of protest and conflict events in North America from 2021 to 2022.

Introduction
Recent protests, riots, and other conflict events in North America have highlighted the increasing challenges hospital-based and prehospital healthcare providers face. This study provides a retrospective descriptive analysis of protest and conflict events in North America from 2021 to 2022, which may aid emergency healthcare services in understanding the scope and challenges of historic events and help better prepare for future similar mass gathering events.

Methods
Data collection was performed using a retrospective database search through the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) database. The ACLED database was searched using the internal database search functions for recorded events that occurred in North America from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022. Date, event type, event subtype, the country of incident, and fatality numbers were extracted. The results were exported into an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed independently by L.C., H.S., and R.H.

Results

There was a total of 52,529 recorded events of political conflict in North America, with 30,269 events in 2021 and 29,260 in 2022. Political conflict events included protests (40,934, 68.8%), violence against civilians (11,532, 19.4%), strategic developments (2,819, 4.7%), battles (2,293, 3.9%), riots (1,909, 3.2%), and remote violence (42, 0.1%). Violence against civilians caused the highest fatalities (13,466, 82.6%), followed by battles (2,662, 16.3%), riots (111, 0.7%), strategic developments, remote violence, and protests (57, 6, and 3 respectively).

Conclusion

Mexico and the United States accounted for most of the political conflicts in North America across 2021 and 2022. In Mexico, protests and violence against civilians were the most common types of conflict, with the latter accounting for the comparatively high fatality compared with the other countries. Battles in Mexico between cartels were the most deadly political conflicts recorded in North America.

Swedish Embassy in Baghdad Is Set Afire Amid Protests Over Quran

Source: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/19/world/middleeast/iraq-sweden-embassy.html

July 19 – Hundreds of protesters stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad early Thursday and set fire to part of the building, Reuters reported, ahead of another planned burning of the Quran in Sweden, which has angered many in the Muslim world and drawn condemnation from the Swedish authorities. Footage shared on social media showed part of the embassy in flames and people with pieces of the building in their hands. The images could not be immediately verified. The Iraqi police fired water cannon to disperse the protesters, according to images shared on social media and news reports. All embassy staff members were safe, the Swedish Foreign Ministry said, according to Reuters. The ministry also said that the Iraqi authorities had the responsibility to protect diplomatic missions and their staff.

> **EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Burning the Quran is not right. Are Swedish authorities so ignorant and stupid not to understand this? Or is there another reason forcing them to keep the fire alive?

The EU Border "Pushbacks" May Have Become a De Facto Migration Policy

By Ella Joyner

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230720-the-eu-border-pushbacks-may-have-become-a-de-facto-migration-policy

July 20 – The term "pushback," though widely employed by human rights organizations and government officials alike, doesn't actually have a specific legal definition. In a report from 2021, UN expert Felipe Gonzalez Morales defined them as "measures, actions or policies effectively resulting in the removal of migrants, individually or in groups, without an individualized assessment in line with human rights obligations and due process guarantees."

These can be carried out by state actors, such as police, border guards or the military or non-state actors, which may include paramilitaries, private security personnel or staff on commercial transport, Morales noted.

While pushbacks aren't defined in international law, they tend to go against well-established principles and legal obligations.

EU states have a right to police their national borders and to deny entry to individuals crossing borders illegally, but as signatories to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and the European Convention of Human Rights they are also bound to respect a number of commitments. These include, according to Morales, the prohibition of collective expulsions, the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids returning asylum seekers back to a country that would clearly be dangerous for them.

What Do Pushbacks Look Like?

A pushback can take a variety of forms. At its simplest, it could be a single border guard stopping a single person intending to claim asylum from crossing a border using violence (or the threat of it), be it physical or verbal.

In May, the US *New York Times* daily newspaper published explosive footage allegedly showing the summary illegal expulsion of a group of asylum seekers, including children, in Greece. The people were first loaded into an unmarked van, then put onto a Greek coast guard boat, offloaded onto an emergency dinghy and set adrift, according to the newspaper. They were ultimately picked up by the Turkish coast guard, concluded the investigation — deemed some of the most complete visual evidence of pushbacks to date. Some of the highest-profile incidents have involved much larger groups of people and more complicated circumstances. An example is the deadly crush at

the Spanish-Moroccan border in the Spanish enclave of Melilla last June. An extensive investigation by the BBC, among others, found that not only had at least 24 people died, more than 450 people had been pushed back from Spanish territory into Morocco during the chaos.

Where Have Alleged Pushbacks Been Recorded?

A coalition of NGOs, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, claims to have gathered testimonies of illegal expulsions affecting some 25,000 people since 2017, British daily newspaper *The Guardian* reported late last year. Pushback incidents have been documented at various spots on the EU's external borders in the past decade, according to Stephanie Pope, a migration expert at the non-governmental organization Oxfam. On land, they have been reported for example on the Evros river at the Greek-Turkish border, at the Spanish-Moroccan border in the Spanish enclave of Melilla, at the borders of Poland and Belarus, Hungary and Serbia, and Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina. At sea, Greek authorities have been accused of pushing boats back before they reach EU waters. The Italian coast guard has also allegedly pushed back boats into Libyan waters.

The EU also has struck formal deals with Libya, and most recently Tunisia, offering funds for authorities to prevent irregular crossings into EU territory before they occur. The EU says this is to tackle people-smuggling and stop migrants making perilous crossings, but for Pope of Oxfam, these amount to "pullbacks."

What Are the Consequences — for Those Pushed and Those Accused of Pushing?

Potential asylum seekers who are pushed back face an array of fates, depending on where it happens, Pope continued. In Greece, where Oxfam has carried out research, people often keep trying to enter the EU. Some succeed, but others end up stuck in Turkey, she said. Some of those pushed back into Libya have reportedly ended up in detention centers. "We still have continuous reports of human slavery, rape, torture, extortion, trafficking," Pope said.

For Hanaa Hakiki of the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), it is worth underlining that no one really knows how many would-be asylum seekers have ended up dead after being turned away.

"Death was always one of the risks with pushbacks, because they were always done with a complete sort of recklessness as to what would happen to these people," Hakiki told DW. The ECCHR, which has litigated for a number of people claiming to have been illegally prevented from entering the EU, has also worked with people who were secretly detained or tortured during a pushback, she said. So far, countries accused of pushbacks have not faced many consequences, Hakiki added. The European Court of Human Rights has been "lukewarm" towards individual complaints, according to her, and the European Commission has not launched disciplinary proceedings against member states accused of pushbacks specifically. Given the precarious circumstances of asylum seekers and migrants, it is often extremely difficult for anyone who believes they have been illegally expelled to litigate against authorities, she stressed. =Pope of Oxfam told DW that pushbacks appear to have become more systematic in recent years and collaboration with non-EU actors has increased. "The EU is essentially building this kind of complex web of policies, operational measures and third country agreements to stop people from ever being able to claim the right of asylum in the EU," she said.

"It's becoming a sort of shadow asylum system."

EDITOR'S COMMENT: There is no legal definition of "pushback". Is there a definition of "national borders"? I think so! Not to write about the blurred role of the European NGOs.

Role Of Europe In War Against Terrorism – OpEd

By Mir Hassan and Ali Abbas

Source: https://www.eurasiareview.com/23062023-role-of-europe-in-war-against-terrorism-oped/

June 23 – The War against Terror, also known as the Global War on Terrorism, has been a global effort since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The United States and its allies launched a military campaign against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, which later expanded to other countries like Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen. Europe, as a key player in global politics, has played a significant role in this war, both in terms of military operations and intelligence gathering. This comprehensive note will analyze Europe's role in the War against Terror, including its military efforts, counter-terrorism strategies, and diplomatic engagement.

Europe has been a significant contributor to the military efforts in the War against Terror. After the 9/11 attacks, NATO invoked Article 5 of its charter for the first time in its history, stating that an attack on one member is an attack on all. This led to the deployment of NATO troops to Afghanistan to help the United States in its mission to oust the Taliban and eliminate al-Qaeda. European countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain have contributed troops to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

The United Kingdom has been one of the largest contributors to ISAF, with over 9,500 troops deployed at the peak of its involvement. The UK also deployed troops to Iraq, where they played a key role in the invasion and subsequent occupation. Germany, France, and Italy have also contributed significant numbers of troops to Afghanistan, with Germany being the third-largest contributor after the US and UK. Spain has also sent troops to Afghanistan and Iraq, although its involvement has been limited compared to other European countries.

Apart from its involvement in ISAF, Europe has also played a key role in other military operations against terrorism. France, for example, has been involved in military operations in Mali against Islamist militants. The French military, along with other European countries, has been supporting the Malian government in its fight against groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). Similarly, the UK has been involved in military operations in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic State.

Europe has also developed and implemented a range of counter-terrorism strategies to combat the threat of terrorism. These strategies involve cooperation between various law enforcement agencies, intelligence services, and other relevant authorities. The primary objective of these strategies is to prevent terrorist attacks and disrupt terrorist networks.

One of the key strategies developed by Europe is the European Union's (EU) Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted in 2005. The strategy focuses on four main areas: prevention, protection, pursuit, and response. It emphasizes the need for greater cooperation and information-sharing between EU member states to prevent and combat terrorism. The EU has also established a range of bodies to facilitate cooperation, such as Europol, which is the EU's law enforcement agency, and Euro just, which is responsible for coordinating the prosecution of cross-border crimes.

Another important strategy developed by Europe is the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), which was launched by the EU in 2011. The network is made up of practitioners and experts from various fields who work together to develop and implement effective strategies to prevent radicalization and extremism. The network has developed a range of tools and resources to support member states in their efforts to prevent radicalization, such as training programs, toolkits, and best practice guides.

Europe has also been engaged in diplomatic efforts to combat terrorism. Diplomatic engagement involves cooperation between governments and international organizations to prevent and combat terrorism. The primary objective of diplomatic engagement is to address the root causes of terrorism and promote stability and security in regions affected by terrorism.

One of the main examples of Europe's diplomatic engagement in the War against Terror is its engagement with countries in North Africa and the Middle East. The EU has been involved in supporting political and economic reforms in these regions to address the underlying causes of terrorism. For example, the EU has provided financial and technical assistance to Tunisia and Morocco to support their political and economic reforms. The EU has also worked with countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia to combat the financing of terrorism.

The EU has also been involved in diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts in the Middle East, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Syrian civil war. The EU has provided financial and humanitarian assistance to countries affected by the conflict, as well as supporting peace negotiations and mediation efforts. The EU has also been involved in efforts to combat the spread of extremist ideologies, such as working with Muslim leaders and organizations to promote moderate Islam and counter extremist narratives.

Despite Europe's significant contributions to the War against Terror, there have been challenges and criticisms of its role. One of the challenges has been the lack of coordination and cooperation between European countries, both in terms of military operations and counter-terrorism strategies. This has led to duplication of efforts and a lack of effectiveness in some areas. For example, some countries have been accused of using their involvement in the War against Terror to advance their own political and economic interests, rather than working towards common goals.

Another challenge has been the criticism of Europe's counter-terrorism strategies, particularly in relation to human rights and civil liberties. Some of the measures adopted by European countries, such as increased surveillance and detention of suspects without trial, have been criticized for violating human rights and civil liberties. This has led to tensions between European countries and civil society organizations, as well as some criticism from international bodies like the United Nations.

In conclusion, Europe has played a significant role in the War against Terror, both in terms of military operations and counter-terrorism strategies. European countries have contributed troops to the NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan, as well as participating in other military operations against terrorism. Europe has also developed and implemented a range of counter-terrorism strategies, including the EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Radicalization Awareness Network. Diplomatic engagement has also been a key part of Europe's role in the War against Terror, particularly in supporting political and economic reforms in regions affected by terrorism. Despite challenges and criticisms, Europe's contribution to the War against Terror has been significant and will continue to be a key player in global efforts to combat terrorism.

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Afghanistan Is Once Again A Launching Pad For Attacks On America – We Are Watching It Happen

By Sam Faddis
Source: https://andmagazine.substack.com/p/afghanistan-is-once-again-a-launching

June 26 – One of the critical elements of Joe Biden's administration is the effort put into hiding the multiple national security disasters unfolding before our eyes. The Iranians are on the verge of fielding an arsenal of nuclear weapons. The Chinese could blockade Taiwan at any moment. Drug cartels operate with impunity a hundred miles north of our southern border. The pretense remains – 'none of this is happening'.

Perhaps nowhere is this phenomenon on greater display than in Afghanistan. For all intents and purposes, Afghanistan simply fell off all maps when Joe cut and ran in 2021. We spent twenty years there fighting to prevent the nation from ever again becoming a launching pad for attacks on the United States. Yet, magically, when we left that danger vanished.

Nothing to fear. Nothing to see. Move along.

A recent United Nations report highlights with startling clarity just how wrong that is. Afghanistan is once again a terrorist safe haven. Al Qaida is back in strength. The clock has already started in the run-up to the next attack.

"The link between the Taliban and both Al-Qaida and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remains strong and symbiotic. A range of terrorist groups have greater freedom of manoeuvre under the Taliban de facto authorities. They are making good use of this, and **the threat of terrorism is rising in both Afghanistan and the region**. While they have sought to reduce the profile of these groups and have conducted operations against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan Province (ISIL-K), in general, the Taliban have not delivered on the counter-terrorism provisions under the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States of America and the Taliban."

"**There are indications that Al-Qaida is rebuilding operational capability**, that TTP is launching attacks into Pakistan with support from the Taliban, that groups of foreign terrorist fighters are projecting threat across Afghanistan's borders and that the operations of ISIL-K are becoming more sophisticated and lethal (if not more numerous)."

"The relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaida remained close and symbiotic, with Al-Qaida viewing Taliban-administered Afghanistan a safe haven. Al-Qaida still aims to strengthen its position in Afghanistan and has been interacting with the Taliban, supporting the regime and protecting senior Taliban figures."

"The number of all Al-Qaida fighters in the country is estimated to be 400, reaching 2,000 with family members and supporters included, 9 operating in the south (Helmand, Zabul and Kandahar Provinces), centre (Ghazni, Kabul and Parwan) and east (Kunar, Nangarhar and Nuristan). All Al-Qaida locations were attempting to reduce their visibility and minimize communications. The group has established new training

camps in Badghis, Helmand, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Zabul, with safe houses in Farah, Helmand, Herat and Kabul. One Member State reported the arrival of 20 to 25 Arab foreign fighters to Kunar and Nuristan, where the location of a camp was stated to be specifically for the training of suicide bombers, accompanied by a new Al-Qaida media apparatus being established in Herat."

"With the patronage of the Taliban, Al-Qaida members have received appointments and advisory roles in the Taliban security and administrative structures."

"Over the past year, the de facto Ministry of Interior continued its distribution of Afghan passports and tazkiras (national identity cards) to Al-Qaida members with advisory roles in main Afghan cities."

UN Sanctions Monitoring Report via longwarjournal.com

The reality is that there is increasingly no clear dividing line between the Taliban and Al Qaida in Afghanistan. They are both terrorist organizations. They both have the same goal, the waging of Holy War and the establishment of a worldwide Islamic caliphate built on the mad principles of their 7th-century world view.

The 9/11 attacks were never intended to be the end of anything for Al Qaida. They were in many ways the beginning. At the time of those attacks, Al Qaida was working in a variety of ways on the acquisition of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. It continued those efforts for years thereafter and was prevented from carrying out follow on attacks only because of aggressive worldwide operations spearheaded by the CIA.

No one in Al Qaida has changed their goals. They remain committed to attacking what they call the "far enemy." That's us. They remain fixated on bringing the war here to our soil as they did on 9/11. Now, once again, they enjoy a safe, secure platform from which to operate. Now, once again, we have given them breathing room and space.

It is not just that we have returned to where we were before September 11, 2001 however. This administration has not simply handed Afghanistan to terrorists. It has opened our borders and dismantled any systems we had in place to prevent terrorists from entering the country.

Millions of people are streaming into our country without documentation. We have no idea who they are. Ultralight aircraft routinely cross our southern border and operate deep inside the country. Sophisticated networks using counterfeit FedEx vans and operatives in camouflage are on our soil all day every day.

We are wide open to attack. Afghanistan is once again a launching pad for attacks on the United States. We are watching, waiting for it to happen, and doing nothing.

Sam Faddis is a retired CIA Operations Officer. Served in Near East and South Asia. Author, commentator. Senior Editor AND Magazine.

Al-Shabaab Surges on Multiple Fronts in Somalia

By Jacob Zenn

Terrorism Monitor Volume: 21 Issue: 13
Source: https://jamestown.org/program/brief-al-shabaab-surges-on-multiple-fronts-in-somalia/

The Pearl Hotel along Mogadishu's Lido Beach after the June attack via The National

June 26 – On June 8, al-Shabaab raided a hotel along Mogadishu's Lido Beach and killed six guests and three members of the Somali special forces, who had entered the hotel to rescue 84 hostages that eventually escaped (garoweonline.com, June 9). The attack sent a message to the country's leadership that nowhere in Mogadishu is immune to violence, since the hotel is located in a "safe" district, frequented by government officials and international visitors. More specifically, the attack undermined Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, who has now had two major hotel attacks take place since he assumed office in September 2022. The first al-Shabaab hotel attack of Mahmoud's tenure occurred at the Villa Rays hotel in November 2022. After that attack, which saw 14 people killed after a 20-hour siege, Mahmoud claimed that al-Shabaab was

"losing ground" and pledged a "total war" against the group (theafricareport.com, November 30, 2022). Yet, the follow-up attack on another hotel in Lido Beach has decisively refuted Mahmoud's claims regarding al-Shabaab's supposed defeat.

Beyond the hotel attacks, al-Shabaab's most successful recent operation involved killing 54 Ugandan troops at a base southwest of Mogadishu (aljazeera.com, June 4). This prompted a reaction from Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who acknowledged the deaths, but noted that the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) subsequently retook the base from al-Shabaab. Most likely, however, al-Shabaab simply abandoned the base after capturing it.

Al-Shabaab also made the most of the attack on the base by releasing a video to propagandize the operation (garoweonline.com, June 6). In the video, the group's leader, known as Abu Ubaidah, gave a motivational talk to fighters, five of whom then launched vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) to break through the base's entrance. Following the breach of the base, several hundred al-Shabaab fighters then entered the base to massacre the Ugandan troops and destroy or pilfer weaponry.

Despite the efforts of the African Union (AU) to combat al-Shabaab, the group is proving to be highly resilient. In 2022, the group also attacked another base and killed 10 Burundian peacekeepers (france24.com, May 4, 2022). Ethiopia, for its part, claimed that al-Shabaab attempted to raid a border town between Ethiopia and Somalia, but the attack was thwarted, with the group's suicide bombers neutralized (aljazeera.com, June 7).

What becomes clear from the latest al-Shabaab operations and propaganda videos is that Abu Ubaidah is a leader who maintains close proximity to (and significant influence over) his foot soldiers. The group remains steadfast in its determination to eliminate the "foreign" presence of AU troops in Somalia, including through extensive suicide bombings of military and civilian targets, in order to ultimately enforce sharia law throughout Somalia.

The "Axis of Instability" and the State of Global Terrorism: Interview with Ali Soufan

Source: https://hir.harvard.edu/the-axis-of-instability-and-the-state-of-global-terrorism-interview-with-ali-soufan/

June 26 – ALI SOUFAN, a former FBI special agent and the lead investigator on some of the world's most complex international terrorism cases, gained an international reputation as a top counterterrorism operative. He is the Chairman and CEO of The Soufan Group, Founder of The Soufan Center and has been featured in books, films, television series, newspaper articles, and documentaries across the globe.

You gained a lot of prestige from your work investigating the 9/11 attacks. In fact, you were only one of eight FBI agents able to speak fluent Arabic at the time of the attacks – clearly, the FBI's domestic counterterrorism capabilities have expanded since then. What techniques are currently at the forefront of preventing terrorism on American soil?

Well, unfortunately, these days, terrorism is not a priority. Not in the United States, not in so many different countries around the world. We're more into the great power competition that you hear about—it's China, [or] what's going on in Ukraine. The dynamics are very different in the world today. In terms of techniques we have at our disposal when we deal with the domestic terrorism component: [we have] the strategy of the Biden administration, [and] some of the issues that were implemented even before under the Trump administration. We're trying to be involved, not only [with] the US government, but with civil society, in raising awareness. The government is now more and more into intelligence gathering in pursuing investigations and prosecutions. However, unfortunately, I believe it took us a long time to recognize the threat of domestic terrorism. And I'm concerned that it's going to be difficult at this stage to deal with it without the political support from everybody in Congress from both parties, taking into account that the threat by supremacist groups or [the] far right, or whatever you want to call them, is as significant as the threat that we had before with the jihadis.

I think if you look at the tools [that are] available, we have criminal tools that are available to the FBI to investigate any criminal activities. But a lot of the important and significant tools that we had before in targeting jihadis or international terrorist organizations, tools like material support, cannot [be utilized] against domestic terrorists. So I think we need to start looking into how we can update some of the laws and protocols and procedures in order to deal with the threats as they are today, not as they were before. The Biden administration came with a domestic terrorism strategy, and it's based on, I believe, four pillars. [The first three are] to understand the threat, to prevent recruitment and mobilization, and to disrupt and deter domestic activities before they happen. And I think the fourth one is to attempt to

deal with the core driver [of terrorism], which is very difficult. How do you deal with the core drivers when you have to deal with partisanship, polarization, rampant disinformation, [and the] spread of violent conspiracies over the Internet? It is very difficult for us to figure out how to develop a comprehensive operational plan to accomplish the goals set by the domestic terrorism strategy of the US government at this point.

The Department of Homeland Security argued in 2020 that right-wing violence is the most pressing terrorist threat facing the United States, overtaking foreign terrorist groups. Twenty-two years after 9/11, to what extent are foreign Islamic terror organizations – the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, etc. – still a threat to the average American?

Just because we have a new threat in the United States, in the form of domestic terrorism, doesn't mean that the jihadist threat is over. I think that now, if you look at the situation in the Middle East and other regions, you will see an arc of instability going all the way from the western shores of Africa to Southeast Asia. You have vacuums left behind by collapse of government [and] by Western coalitions, you have enormous opportunities for these terrorist groups and jihadi groups to exploit. And they are doing this. Before 9/11, for example, we had embassies in Libya, Yemen, [and] Syria. Just a few years ago, we had an embassy in Kabul and an embassy in Sudan. We had embassies in so many different places. Now we don't even have diplomatic eyes and ears on the ground. There is a significant vacuum, and many of these regions are controlled by non-state actors. Even the regions where you still have government—for example, Burkina Faso and Mali—up to 40-50% of their territory is controlled by jihadi groups, or groups affiliated with al-Qaeda, or with the so-called Islamic State. So this is a very dangerous situation.

Fortunately, at this point, these groups are not focusing on the global jihad. They are focusing on regional issues and domestic issues, because that's their strategy. If you look into the strategy of al-Qaeda, as stated in *The Management of Savagery*, there are three stages. First, you do terrorism in order to weaken the international and the regional order. Second, you prevent somebody else from filling the vacuum and have people depend on you for security [and] for social services. And you create alliances, and then you establish a state. I think they believe they are in stage two, and some areas are working better than others. But at any stage, with the amount of people they have been able to recruit, the capabilities they are building, [and] the networks that they are able to establish, at any time, these things can shift and they can go back to phase one. They can go back to conducting international terrorist operations. I'm concerned about the numbers of individuals around the world [that are] joining the regional affiliates of al-Qaeda. On the eve of 9/11, [they] had about 400 pledged members. Today, I think [they] have north of 45,000 members. However, not all [of] these individuals are ideologically committed to al-Qaeda. They are not Bin Laden-type al-Qaeda. They are involved with regional affiliates for security or protection. This is the issue in the Sahel, for example. It's not ideological as much as it is ethnic and economic, because of a lot of factors [are] connected to global warming, [including] fighting over resources, which creates tension between the farmers and the herders. And [when] the government protects farmers, al-Qaeda comes and they protect the herders or take revenge [for] what the government is doing to the herders. So there are so many reasons that these groups are getting bigger, not necessarily [for] ideological [or] anti-Western [reasons]. And I think we need to pay attention to these organizations and how they are evolving and how they are moving around the regions in the world. Just because most of the threats in the Western world today come from far-right groups or racially and ethnically motivated individuals and groups does not mean the jihadi threat is over.

Some observers, including at the HIR, have labeled the French Operation Barkhane, which was the French security forces' attempt to quell terrorism in the Sahel, a failure. What does the French withdrawal mean for international security cooperation? Do you think this operation was in fact a failure? And if so, what could the French have done differently in your opinion?

Well, it was as successful as our engagement in Afghanistan, put it this way. Unfortunately, the French and the countries that were working with the French in the region, started to feel mission creep. I think France needed to redefine its strategy in the Sahel, especially after the very fraught relations with its partners over there on the ground, specifically in Mali. Also, you have to keep in mind, public sentiment in the region has been vocal in seeking distance from former colonial powers, such as the French. And you had significant disinformation campaigns, especially by the Russians, building and exploiting these grievances and promoting anti-French and anti-Western sentiment. I think when you look at Mali [and] the Sahel region, it's becoming more and more now the focus of counterterrorism concerns for the US and for other Western governments, because you see all the different al-Qaeda-affiliated groups really being successful in controlling land, building relationships, [and] expanding their influence across ethnic and tribal lines. Now, al-Qaeda is not only the Arabs in southern Algeria, as it used to be before with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. With the new affiliates, you have ethnic groups [including] Fulanis, Arabs, Berber, the Tuareg and so forth.

Also, it's concerning to see a shift with some of the so-called jihadis coming from the Levant regions, Iraq, and even from areas in Pakistan moving towards the Sahel region. So we have affiliates of al-Qaeda [and] affiliates of the Islamic State operating freely in the region, controlling [a] significant amount of land, not only in Mali but also in Burkina Faso and in many other countries. But also, we started to see that the violence is spilling over to coastal Western African states that previously were unaffected—places like Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo,

Ghana, and so forth. So we have this vacuum. And suddenly, we started to also see increased efforts by the Kremlin to woo African leaders and African governments, based on all the stuff that we talked about earlier, and [to] build relationships with them through the deployment of private military companies, such as the Wagner Group.

In Afghanistan, there are questions remaining about the Taliban's connections to terror groups, such as al-Qaeda. How do you see the Taliban government's relationship with terror groups evolving: for the better, or for the worse? And should other countries, including the United States, provide the Taliban with anti-terror support, including intelligence on terrorist positions?

The Taliban has an enemy and it is mostly the branch of the Islamic State-Khorasan or IS-K. But that does not mean that just because the United States is an enemy of IS-K, and the Taliban are an enemy of IS-K, that the Taliban is a good partner or a trusted partner for the United States. The US government is [definitely] engaged through the Qataris and through other entities with the Afghans. But this relationship is very limited. And especially when it comes to counterterrorism, there [are] still a lot of specific sensitivities in dealing with them. You can see what happened, for example, with the targeting of Ayman al-Zawahiri, the former leader of al-Qaeda, in Kabul. He was operating freely in the Afghani capital. Many terrorist organizations, groups, and individuals went back to Afghanistan. The Taliban now are in a difficult position. They know how to be insurgents, but now they have to be a government. And how do you become a valuable partner for your region—I'm not even talking about the Western countries—if you don't [make] it very difficult and impossible for these terrorist groups to come over and operate freely in your land? Also, at the same time, I think there's a division among the Taliban. These divisions [are] not new. The Taliban hasn't been monolithic. You have the people down south, and they support Mullah Omar's son, Mullah Yaqoob, who was the defense minister. You have the Pashtun in the north. That's more into the Haqqani Network, and they control the Ministry of the Interior. And now, we've started to see regional countries like Pakistan, China, Russia, [and] Iran trying to create and develop relationships with proxies within the Taliban government and the Taliban movement. And the return of terrorist organizations—as mentioned not only by the US government but also by the UN— back to operate in Afghanistan is at the least concerning.

Several Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been accused of funding terrorist organizations, including the Islamic State. Have American efforts in the region hindered the export of resources to terrorist groups? Or have we turned a blind eye to deeply entrenched networks of support in government and private industry?

That's a very good question. I think it will not be fair to say that the United States and the international community didn't do a significant job in hindering the terrorism finances in the region, especially in the Gulf countries. The US government and State Department and Treasury have created a lot of MOUs [memoranda of understanding], agreements with these governments to counter terrorism finance, and anti-money laundering operations to help them bridge the gaps that exist in their system. [The US shares] intelligence with them, in order to make it difficult [for] individuals, entities, organizations, and private sector companies to be used as a resource to these terrorist organizations. I think we have been very successful in this. Now, there are other problems that sometimes countries have to deal with. And it is a problem of definition. For example, many countries in the Middle East do not consider Hamas [to be] a terrorist organization. They consider Hamas [to be] a Palestinian group operating within the Palestinian political system. And then there [are] a lot of geopolitical political relationships that happen between the United States, Israel, and, for example, Qatar in order to figure out how we can build bridges [and] de-escalate conflicts when they happen. That's why, when you see a problem in Gaza, immediately, Qatar and Egypt and other countries are working with the US government and the Israelis to de-escalate. If the Qataris or other entities all considered Hamas [to be] a terrorist organization, then this channel [would not be] open.

But also at the same time, we have to keep in mind that any kind of support that's going to Gaza is not going directly to Hamas. It's actually going through Israeli banks as part of a bigger agreement that includes Israel and the United States. So I think if we are talking about groups like al-Qaeda [or] ISIS, the State Department and Treasury continue to work very closely with all our partners in the Middle East in order to diminish the financial networks of these groups. And when it comes to different organizations that [are] not necessarily considered terrorist organizations by some of these countries, the situation becomes a little bit more complicated, and it has geopolitical dimensions.

Perspectives on Terrorism

Volume XVII, Issue 2, 2023
Source: https://pt.icct.nl/issue/volume-xvii-issue-2-2023

New issue covers a wide array of issues relating to anti-institutional sentiments, far-right extremism, proliferation of online violence, the threats of terrorism in the digital world, and autoethnographic perspectives on the study of terrorism. The issue concludes with part 6 of the Bibliography on Terrorism

and the Media (including the Internet), and a Review on the Routledge Handbook of Non-Violent Extremism.

- Article "Is Far-Right Violence Actually Increasing in Australia? Tracking Far-Right Terrorism and Violence in Australia between 1990-2020:" Can Australia's existing counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism infrastructure be adapted to combat far-right extremism?
- Article "Public Health Crisis and Hate Crimes: Deciphering the Proliferation of Anti-Asian Violence in the US Before and During Covid-19:" What are the main drivers of anti-Asian violence?
- Article "Rallying Around Empty Signifiers: Understanding and Defining Anti-Government Protest in the Netherlands:" What are the dynamics of anti-government protest in the Netherlands since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Article "Studying Terror Through my I's: Autoethnographic Insier/Outsider Reflections of an Arab- Muslim Researcher:" How does positionality affect research in terrorism studies?
- Article "The Metaverse and Terrorism: Threats and Challenges:" What potential risks and challenges does the metaverse raise?
- Article "When Digital and Physical World Combine: The Metaverse and Gamification of Violent Extremism:" What recommendations can ensure that relevant stakeholders are aware of and can begin to prepare for emerging threats?
- Resources "Bibliography: Terrorism and the Media (including the Internet) Part 6"
- Resources "Book Review: Handbook of Non-Violent Extremism: Groups, Perspectives and New Debates"

ISIS Women in Court: Nadine K. – Time to Reflect?

Source: https://www.counterextremism.com/blog/isis-women-court-nadine-k-time-reflect

The women who left Germany to join ISIS and returned are standing trial. This CEP blog series follows the trials of some of these female returnees. The discussions on Monika K., Nadine K., and Marcia M. can be found here, here, and here. An overview of the state of prosecutions in Germany can be found here (available in English and German) and recent developments in repatriation here.

June 30 – On a hot summer day in June 2023, the court room at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz is packed. National and international journalists, observers from Yazidi organizations, discreet police officers,

and the defendant's family and friends have all come to hear the verdict against female returnee Nadine K. All participants and observers stand as the presiding judge Martina Kohlmeyer reads aloud the verdict after 30 days of trial: nine years and three months in prison for, inter alia, membership in a foreign terrorist organization, violation of the war weapons control act, crimes against humanity by enslavement, deprivation of liberty, and persecution, as well as aiding and abetting genocide. If confirmed upon appeal, this would be the second longest prison sentence for a female returnee in Germany to date. But there are several other aspects that make the case of Nadine K. especially interesting and are worth highlighting.

Having brought an extensive list of charges against Nadine K., the Federal prosecutors saw most of their accusations and the evidence they presented during the trial confirmed by the court's verdict. The court largely followed the prosecutors' argument. According to their statement, Nadine K. had followed Ibrahim O., whom she had married according to Islamic law back to his home country Syria in December 2014, where the couple joined ISIS. While Ibrahim O. worked as a doctor, Nadine K. stayed at home to take care of the household and their two daughters. In April 2016 in Mosul, Ibrahim O. brought home an enslaved Yazidi woman, Naveen Al K. For three years, Naveen Al K. had to cook, clean, and take care of the couple's children and animals. Nadine K. hence exploited Naveen Al K.'s situation for her own benefit. Ibrahim O. also raped the then 21-year-old regularly, a fact that, according to the court, Nadine K. did know about and enabled since she made sure that Naveen Al K. could not flee.

The crimes committed against Naveen Al K. were clearly the trial's centerpiece. In July 2022, the abuse and exploitation of an enslaved Yazidi woman by a female ISIS member has been recognized by a German court in Hamburg as aiding and abetting genocide, an international crime, for the first time. In Koblenz, the presiding judge highlighted Naveen Al K.'s personal strength, as she agreed to travel from Iraq to testify in a foreign country, not knowing Germany's culture, language, or legal system, but trusting in the rule of law in Germany.

A Women's Guest House
The court found Nadine K. also guilty of having hosted, together with her husband, several German ISIS women in their house in Mosul. Interestingly, the judges argued that it was "irrelevant" whether Nadine K.'s house was an official ISIS women's guest house, a so-called *madafa*. The couple's villa fulfilled the same function: hosting single ISIS women who were not allowed to live alone either because they were divorced or because their husbands were on a training or combat mission, had been detained, or died.

A Quagmire of Evidence
Finally, Nadine K. was acquitted of charges regarding a war crime against property. The court argued that while all available information suggested that the couple had indeed "looted" their villa in Mosul from the original owners, there was not enough evidence to prove it. The defense had stressed this lack of evidence during their final statement. The court's acknowledgment that they "do not know" is a positive sign. In several other cases, female returnees had been convicted for war crimes against property. The defense lawyers had argued that an accusation of such a serious crime supported by such little evidence would never have led to a conviction if this act was committed in Germany and not Syria or Iraq.

Indeed, evidence is one of the most challenging aspects of prosecuting returnees in their country of origin. Similar to several other cases, the testimonies of the Yazidi witness and co-plaintiff Naveen Al K. were crucial for the construction of charges and conviction of Nadine K. However, access to more objective evidence in returnee cases remains extremely difficult, for example proof of rent payments or actual involvement in combat beyond training. For the defense, accessing evidence that might exonerate the defendant is even more difficult. Nadine K.'s lawyers had requested to hear several (former) ISIS women as witnesses, which presented a separate set of challenges. For instance, one Finnish woman could not be forced to come testify in a German court and another German woman could not be located.

Missing Perpetrators
What exactly happened in Syria and Iraq remains elusive. What is also missing are some of the key perpetrators of ISIS crimes: its male members. The husbands of female returnees like Nadine K., Sara O., or Jalda A. remain the obvious blanks in these trials. Investigations are ongoing, but no German man has stood trial for crimes against Yazidis yet. This lack of prosecution and accountability is partly the consequence of a policy of inaction towards male foreign terrorist fighters detained in Northeast Syria for more than four years. The Kurdish administration recently announced its intent to prosecute foreigners themselves, but this is likely a move to put pressure on foreign governments to finally repatriate their nationals.

Living in a Bubble
In its statement, the court recognized Nadine K. as an "intelligent and self-confident woman," whose previous life in Germany and behavior in court did not match the defendant's "claim to naivety." Nadine K.

had surprised Ibrahim O. with her conversion the day of their Islamic marriage and had traveled to Syria *after* the genocide against the Yazidis, events that were notable in German and Western news. Indeed, female returnees often claim they did not know about ISIS crimes or their extent. But no matter how much these women knew or were able to control their individual lives, cases like Nadine K.'s demonstrate how adaptative and opportunistic many were. The verdict is not yet legally binding, and the defense will likely appeal the verdict. Once the sentence is final, Nadine K. is hopefully able to use the time spent in prison to reflect on her decision-making as well as the deplorable consequences of her actions for herself and others. If she undertakes such critical reflection, this will be an important first step to reconstruct her life after release—potentially together with her children.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: Let the women live their dreams in Syria or Iraq!

Imam Tawhidi on France, the West and Islamic extremism

"You (France) went to the Muslim countries and imported the garbage that the Muslim countries wanted to put in prison or isolate away from society. Why? For cheap labor!

Mohammad Tawhidi is an Australian Shia Muslim Imam. He currently serves as vice president of the World Council of Imams, an organization based in Iraq.

like the Muslim Brotherhood, who are friends with the IRGC

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Does Islamic extremism have a future in Bangladesh?

By Afsan Chowdhury (researcher & journalist)
Source: https://www.newagebd.net/article/205830/does-islamic-extremism-have-a-future-in-bangladesh

Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka in 2016. — Al Jazeera

July 06 – It is a multi-layered question, which, therefore, has multiple answers. Extremism itself has many layers — from violent extremism to structural extremism — and, like all extremism, threatens the state. Yet it is also a social issue because terrorism/extremism arises not from state agencies but society. They are clubbed together as 'non-state' actors making the equation obvious.

However, this conflict between the formal state and informal forces who wish to take over the state spillover into the social space triggering violence, often random. Which is why it is not the ideology — and there are many that powers terrorism — that people are afraid of but the violence that affects them negatively.

The brewing phase

ISLAMIC extremism has been stewing in Bangladesh after the Afghan debacle of the erstwhile invasion by the Soviet Union, against which several Bangladeshis had also gone to participate, grew large. The Afghan war had created an enabling space for such activities. Thus, a series of events took place which indicated the presence of such elements but were not dealt with as a serious threat as such. The 'Islamic'

content of the Afghan resistance made the issue a bit sensitive as the public, particularly in rural areas, were largely sympathetic towards the anti-Russian militants. And, the people being pro-Islamic goes without mention.

By the mid-2000s, the issue had become serious and a series of incidents occurred which indicated that a militancy network had been put in place. The arrest of Bangla Bhai and his ultimate trial during the BNP regime and hanging in 2007 was a mile post which showed that competing extremisms were a fact of militant politics in Bangladesh. The 2004 grenade attack on the Awami League meeting which killed and injured many has been blamed by the party on Islamic extremists close to the then ruling party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

What it shows is that almost two decades of extremist activism had passed before it began to look like a state threat.

Maturing phase and Holey Artisan

BY THE time the elections of 2014 were completed, the spread of violent extremism with a focus on recruiting young educated people was no secret. Apart from that, local level political violence was high. Kansat and Phulbari incidents show that the quantum of violence in the political space was mature, whether ideological or not. By 2016, such incidents were common and jangi activities were regularly reported in the media.

The very high-profile killing of several people targeted by jangis, however, did not bring a response from the Awami League government that could be called a serious response. So, it was amidst a period of considerable violent activities that the attack on the high-end restaurant killing took place. It, ultimately, concluded with a special army force mounting an attack against the jangis, killing all jangis inside and freeing the hostages. It is only after that we see the conversation on Islamic terrorism to go centre-stage. The counter-extremism measures taken by the authorities were very robust and some human rights violation charges were even levelled. But the authorities saw the attack not just against the state structure but its image far more. And foreigners linked to development projects were killed which was a blow to its economic strategy.

No one is sure how many extremists were killed, disappeared, arrested or still linger in jail. While there are sceptics who question whether the jangi problem has been tackled or not, the fact remains that no significant jangi action has taken place since the official counter-offensive began.

Does violent extremism have a future?

IN THE post-2016 attack, many international agencies invested in Bangladesh and its counter-terrorism strategy which made the apparatus strong. Surveillance systems have been expanded and many individuals have experienced detention and some have disappeared. A great deal of situation analysis has also been done to examine the situation. While many have been a trifle alarmist in their predictions, some have been more measured.

That jangis are still here, particularly in tow with CHT-based extremist groups, is a fact. But analyses also show that almost every violent extremist group is triggered by external invasion and as a response to a sense of being occupied by a hostile power. The top five violent extremist groups in the world — al-Qaeda, Taleban, IS, LTTE and the Irish Republican army — are all anti-foreign power invasion-based.

These groups came into being to free a state more than establishing an ideology. Ideology served as a mobilising tool. Religion, race and ethnicity work best in such cases as demonising the enemy through race and religion lenses is easy. And they never disappear as the CHT shows where a sense of 'occupation' is the case. A peace treaty has not halted armed insurrections there.

Ideological groups appear more to be fringe which continue to exist but are never a serious threat to the state. The Leftist armies of South America, Naxalites of India and even JVP of Sri Lanka are examples. However, they are capable of conducting violent actions which are followed by counter-offensive by state forces.

The chances of a major violent extremism threat to the Bangladesh state are low, but they will go on at different levels and in sizes. The CHT will remain restive and the chances of more operations with other violent extremist outfits in conversation with them remain.

Can India with the help of the United States stop the rise of Islamist forces in Bangladesh?

By Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury

Source: https://www.weeklyblitz.net/opinion/can-india-with-the-help-of-the-united-states-stop-the-rise-of-islamist-forces-in-bangladesh/

July 06 – The rise of Islamist forces in Bangladesh is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. This has become a serious concern to Bangladesh's nearest neighbor – India, because of the past track record of the Islamist forces such as Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which had almost

openly supported anti-India notion and extended patronization to various insurgency and militancy outfits inside India. Under such a scenario, it is well-anticipated that any Islamist party such as BNP returning to power would pose serious security threats to India, the region and beyond. Many analysts are trying to understand if India, with the active help of the United States can stop Islamists from returning to power in Bangladesh.

Replying to this question, a key policy advisor to the Biden administration, seeking anonymity said, While India and the United States can play a supportive role, it is essential to acknowledge that addressing this challenge requires the active involvement and commitment of the Bangladeshi government and society.

India and Bangladesh share a historical, cultural, and geographical bond. The two countries have a long-standing partnership that encompasses various areas of cooperation, including security, trade, and people-to-people ties. India can work closely with Bangladesh to share intelligence, enhance border security, and exchange best practices in countering extremism.

Strengthening collaboration between intelligence agencies and law enforcement authorities can help identify and prevent the activities of radical groups that pose a threat to both countries.

The United States, as a global leader in counterterrorism efforts, can also support Bangladesh in its fight against extremism. The US can provide technical assistance, capacity building programs, and training to strengthen the Bangladeshi security apparatus. Additionally, the US can collaborate with Bangladesh on countering the financing of terrorism and promoting deradicalization initiatives.

However, it is important to recognize that countering the rise of Islamist forces requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond security measures. Socio-economic development, education, and addressing the root causes of extremism are crucial aspects of any strategy. The United States can support Bangladesh's efforts in these areas by providing development assistance, promoting inclusive education, and fostering economic opportunities for marginalized communities. Empowering moderate voices and promoting religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue are also essential components of countering extremism.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Bangladeshi government to address the rise of Islamist forces with the help of its international allies, particularly India. The government can play a vital role by implementing effective policies, ensuring the rule of law, promoting secularism, and protecting the rights of all citizens. The ruling party in Bangladesh needs to abandon its decades-old religious orthodoxy and wrong foreign policy by normalizing relations with the State of Israel, which is one of the prioritized foreign policies of the Biden administration. This decision shall have extremely effective, positive and important impact for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her party. It will also make it Biden administration's key allies and once such steps are signaled, US President Joe Biden may include Bangladesh in his itinerary during his India visit this September. Bangladesh government needs to understand, it is crucial to create an environment that discourages the spread of extremist ideologies and fosters social harmony.

India and the United States can support Bangladesh in its efforts to counter the rise of Islamist forces. Collaboration in intelligence sharing, security cooperation, capacity building, and development assistance can contribute to these efforts. However, it is imperative to recognize that the primary responsibility lies with the Bangladeshi government and society. By adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of extremism, promotes inclusivity, and upholds democratic values, Bangladesh can effectively tackle this challenge and ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for its citizens.

Now the question is – what would happen if Islamists return to power in Bangladesh and restart patronizing insurgency inside India?

The scenario of Islamists returning to power in Bangladesh and reigniting insurgency inside India raises serious concerns about regional stability and security. While it is crucial to approach this hypothetical situation with caution, analyzing the potential consequences can shed light on the potential challenges and implications for both countries.

Bangladesh, a secular democracy with a predominantly Muslim population, has made significant progress in recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in countering extremist ideologies and maintaining a peaceful and inclusive society. However, a hypothetical situation where Islamists return to power in Bangladesh and patronize insurgency inside India would likely have severe repercussions.

The resurgence of Islamist forces in Bangladesh and their support for insurgency inside India would strain the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Trust and cooperation built over the years would be severely undermined, leading to increased tensions and a breakdown in diplomatic channels. Trade, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people ties would also suffer as a result.

The revival of insurgency inside India with support from Bangladesh could potentially lead to an escalation of cross-border conflict. India would be compelled to take stringent measures to safeguard its national security, which may involve strengthening border control, launching counterinsurgency operations, and intensifying intelligence-sharing efforts with other neighboring countries. This could result in heightened military activities and border skirmishes, further destabilizing the region.

If Islamist forces regain power in Bangladesh and support insurgency in India, it would also have significant implications for Bangladesh's internal security. The country would face increased radicalization, domestic instability, and the potential for extremist groups to exploit the situation to further their own agenda. The

government would be tasked with dealing with these internal security challenges, which may divert resources and attention from other crucial developmental priorities. While the government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been committedly confronting extremist groups, the course would turn 180 degree if Islamist forces such as Bangladesh Nationalist Party succeed in returning to power.

The resurgence of insurgency in India with support from Bangladesh would have broader regional security implications. It could potentially provide a safe haven for extremist groups, facilitate the spread of radical ideologies, and encourage collaboration among various extremist elements across borders. This would pose a significant threat to the stability and security of neighboring countries as well, including those in South Asia.

Political instability and security threats resulting from the return of Islamist forces and the patronage of insurgency would inevitably impact economic growth and social development in both Bangladesh and India. Investor confidence would dwindle, trade would suffer, and development projects could be put on hold as resources are redirected to address security challenges. The overall well-being and livelihoods of the people in both countries would be adversely affected.

It is important to reiterate that the above analysis is based on a hypothetical scenario. The governments of India and Bangladesh, along with other regional stakeholders, have a vested interest in maintaining peace, stability, and cooperation. Both countries have shown a commitment to counterterrorism efforts and have been cooperating in various areas, including intelligence sharing and security collaboration. It is in their mutual interest to continue strengthening these ties and working together to address any potential security threats.

The resurgence of Islamists in power in Bangladesh and their patronage of insurgency inside India would have far-reaching consequences for regional stability, bilateral relations, and internal security. It is essential for both countries to remain vigilant, maintain open lines of communication, and collaborate on intelligence-sharing and counterterrorism efforts to prevent such a scenario from materializing. Regional cooperation and a commitment to democratic values, secularism, and inclusive governance are vital in addressing security challenges and promoting peace in the region.

Counterterrorism experts are saying, Islamist forces returning to Power in Bangladesh shall pose a serious security threat to India and the region. They also fear, pro-Islamist terrorist organizations such as Bangladesh Nationalist Party may succeed in returning to power with the help of the Biden administration as it has recently hired Hunter Biden as its lobbyist. Following Hunter's appointment as lobbyist, Washington has been showing exposed hostility towards the ruling Awami League, while the US Department of State earlier has announced a new visa policy for Bangladesh clearly with the agenda of intimidating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government as well as members of civil-military administration.

The rise of Islamist forces and their potential return to power in Bangladesh would undoubtedly raise serious concerns about security, not only for Bangladesh but also for neighboring countries, particularly India. The implications of such a scenario could have far-reaching consequences, impacting regional stability, cross-border relations, and the overall security environment. Understanding the potential security threats is essential in comprehending the gravity of the situation.

If Islamist forces regain power in Bangladesh, there is a real risk of increased radicalization and the spread of extremist ideologies. This would provide fertile ground for various extremist groups to recruit new members and carry out activities with impunity. The ideological alignment between such groups in Bangladesh and India could lead to the establishment of cross-border networks, further facilitating the spread of radicalism.

A return to power by Islamist forces in Bangladesh might result in the revival of patronage for insurgency and terrorist activities, not only within Bangladesh but also across the border in India. This could manifest in the form of logistical support, safe havens, and training camps for extremist groups operating in India. The increased cross-border movement of militants and the exchange of arms and resources would pose a grave threat to India's internal security.

The resurgence of Islamist forces in Bangladesh would present significant challenges to border security. It would require India to enhance its vigilance and strengthen its border control measures to prevent the infiltration of militants, weapons, and contraband. The increased militarization of the border and the potential for cross-border attacks would strain the resources and capabilities of Indian security forces.

Islamist forces in power might exacerbate intercommunal tensions within Bangladesh, which could spill over into neighboring countries. This could lead to sectarian conflicts, communal violence, and social unrest. The resultant influx of refugees and the displacement of populations could further destabilize the region and create additional security challenges.

Regional Destabilization: The return of Islamist forces in Bangladesh would have wider regional implications, potentially destabilizing the entire South Asian region. It would encourage the collaboration and coordination of extremist groups across borders, posing a shared security threat to countries in the region. The resulting security vacuum could also attract international terrorist organizations, exacerbating the situation further.

To counter the potential security threats posed by Islamist forces returning to power in Bangladesh, a comprehensive approach involving various stakeholders is necessary:

Strengthening Counterterrorism Cooperation: India and Bangladesh must bolster their cooperation in intelligence sharing, joint counterterrorism operations, and capacity building. This includes increased coordination between security agencies, exchange of information on extremist networks, and joint efforts to disrupt terrorist financing.

Promoting Social and Economic Development: Addressing the root causes of extremism is crucial. Both countries should focus on promoting social and economic development, providing educational opportunities, and addressing grievances to prevent the radicalization of marginalized communities.

Enhancing Border Security: India and Bangladesh need to collaborate closely on border security measures. This involves sharing real-time intelligence, conducting joint patrols, and strengthening border infrastructure to prevent illegal activities and cross-border movement of militants.

Regional Cooperation: A collective effort involving all countries in the region is vital in countering the security threats posed by Islamist forces. This includes sharing best practices, intelligence sharing, joint training programs, and multilateral cooperation frameworks such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

The return of Islamist forces to power in Bangladesh would undoubtedly pose serious security threats to India and the region as a whole. It requires a proactive and coordinated approach from both countries, along with regional cooperation, to counter these challenges effectively. Strengthening counterterrorism efforts, addressing the root causes of extremism, and promoting socio-economic development are essential in mitigating the security risks and ensuring regional stability and peace.

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Record 853,955 Foreigners Overstay Visa Decades after Terrorists Did it to Execute 9/11

Source: https://www.judicialwatch.org/foreigners-overstay-visa/

June 28 – More than two decades after Islamic terrorists exploited the U.S. government's inefficient system for tracking foreigners who overstay visas, the problem is only getting worse with a startling 853,955 visa overstays in fiscal year 2022. A new report issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) tries to downplay the severity of the situation by shining a light on the positive, that the overstay rate is a mere 3.67% compared to 96.33% of over 23 million nonimmigrants that departed the country on time in accordance with the terms of their admission.

The reality is that the latest available overstay figure is an alarming record-breaker for the U.S. and it indicates that national security is not being taken seriously by the government. At least four of the September 11 hijackers were in the United States with expired visas and all these years later the government—under both Democratic and Republican administrations—has not found a way to adequately track visa overstayers. After the 9/11 attacks Congress created a system to track the entry and exit of foreign nationals by using electronically scanned fingerprints and photographs. It was called the U.S. Visitor and Immigration Status Indicator Technology (US VISIT) and it was seriously flawed even though the government invested around a billion dollars over several years to get it going. It never worked properly, however.

In the meantime, a persistent crisis involving visa overstays has gripped the nation in years following the 2001 attacks. The investigative arm of Congress, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that nearly half of the nation's illegal aliens entered the U.S. legally and overstayed their visa undetected. Other federal investigations have revealed that the U.S. has failed to properly remove millions who overstayed their visa, including DHS losing track of hundreds of dangerous foreigners that "could pose a national security or public safety concerns." Every year the government fails to catch hundreds of thousands of foreign nationals who overstay their visa. In fiscal year 2015 it was more than half a million, including thousands from terrorist nations like Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya and Syria. A few years later the number of visa overstayers increased to 702,000. Among them was a Portuguese man with an expired visa charged in the gruesome kidnap and murder of a young woman whose body was found bound in a suitcase on a Connecticut street.

The latest figures included in the Fiscal Year 2022 Entry/Exit Overstay Report illustrate that the problem is much worse than previously reported, though DHS tries to sugarcoat it by highlighting that most foreigners left when they were supposed to. The agency also uses the excuse of the "unique challenges"

due to COVID-19 and temporary changes in U.S. policy that allowed travelers to file for immigration benefits while out of status. Nevertheless, DHS is forced to recognize in the document that the record-breaking figure of 853,955 "presents the overstay rates of those who remained in the United States beyond their authorized period of admission with no evidence of an extension to their period of admission or adjustment to another immigration status." This is very disturbing and deserves congressional scrutiny.

The new data shows that 9,005 Chinese citizens overstayed their student visa last fiscal year, accounting for around 16% of student or exchange visitor overstays. India is second in the category with 5,037 followed by 2,918 Colombians and 2,427 Brazilians. Venezuelans accounted for the largest number of short-term visitors with expired visas at 172,640 followed by Mexico with 123,623. Mexicans also accounted for the biggest chunk of overstays in temporary worker visas with 131,000 followed by India with 5,800. Throughout the report DHS appears to make excuses for the security lapses, writing in one instance that "determining lawful status requires more than matching entry and exit data." As an example, the agency offers that "a person may receive a six-month period of admission upon entry and then subsequently apply for and receive an extension for the period of admission of up to six months from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services." Identifying those extensions, changes, or adjustments of status are necessary steps to determine whether a person has overstayed the authorized period of admission, DHS stresses.

Man who killed 23 people in Texas Walmart shooting targeting Latinos sentenced to 90 life terms by federal judge

Source: https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/07/us/el-paso-walmart-shooter-sentencing-friday/index.html

July 07 – Patrick Crusius, the mass shooter who killed 23 people at an El Paso Walmart in one of the deadliest attacks targeting Latinos in modern US history, was sentenced to 90 consecutive life terms by a federal judge on Friday. Prosecutors had recommended Crusius, 24, receive consecutive life sentences for each of the 90 federal charges, including hate crimes and firearms offenses, to which he pleaded guilty.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: 90 life charges is a silly legal populism. One life sentence would be enough. Then, the terrorist is 24 yo which means that the state (and taxpayers) will support him for a minimum of 50 years. Why? When you offer nothing back then what is the point fo living? It is strange because death penalties have been awarded to people who killed only one or two persons. Here the number is 23!!!

Where Transnational Crime Meets Terrorism

By Antonio Graceffo
Source: https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/07/07/where-transnational-crime-meets-terrorism/

July 07 – Terrorist groups and transnational crime organizations share many of the same attributes, operating outside of the law, often committing violent acts and murder, as well as engaging in illicit business. In some instances, the line between the two can blur. Abu Sayyaf, once an Islamic separatist terrorist organization in the Philippines, has transformed itself into a maritime criminal organization committing piracy and kidnappings for profit. Often, however, a terrorist group remains a terrorist group and a transnational criminal organization remains such. The primary difference between the two is that terrorists are primarily driven by ideology, while criminals seek profit.

Terrorism is defined as the use of threats or violence, to achieve objectives, whether political, religious, or ideological objectives. Domestic terrorists, transnational terrorists, insurgents, or guerrillas form or join organizations based on shared ideology. Terrorists often use extreme violence or violence against civilians in order to send a message, sow fear, or incite terror, hence the name, terrorist.

Transnational organized crime groups are self-perpetuating associations operating by illegal means, across national borders. Different from terrorist groups, transnational crime organizations are driven by profit. They often engage in drug-, human-, and weapons-trafficking, as well as money

laundering, extortion, credit card fraud, financial crime, counterfeit goods, and cybercrime.

In spite of differences in motivation, there are three general categories of cooperation which occur between terrorist networks and transnational criminal organizations. The first is coexistence, whereby the two groups operate in the same geographic region without warring on one another. The second is cooperation where they may share mutual interests which they feel can best be achieved if they work together. The third type of cooperation is convergence, which occurs when the groups engage in similar activities. With convergence, the two groups find that they share values and goals which are being suppressed by the state. The two share resources, identifying and exploiting weaknesses in the state system.

Factors that contribute to cooperation between transnational terrorists and criminals include porous borders and weak government enforcement. Two geographic regions where terrorism and crime are closely aligned are the Golden Crescent (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam).

The Golden Crescent

Criminal activity in the Golden Crescent has increased since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Taliban have joined forces with 20 foreign terrorist groups, and have become more deeply involved in transnational organized crime. The group is operating directly or through local cells in Pakistan and Iran, while engaging in large-scale organized criminal activity around the world, producing and smuggling drugs, including heroin, opium, methamphetamine, and marijuana. They also earn money through illegal logging and mineral extraction, as well as human trafficking. The Taliban smuggles and sells gemstones and semi-precious minerals, which find their way to wealthy consumers in Europe and the U.S.

Within the borders of Iran, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operates corporations in legitimate sectors, such as construction. They also control illicit businesses in Iran. They control the country's government and courts, as well. Internationally, they sponsor terror groups in other countries.

The Golden Triangle

Illicit activity in the Golden Triangle is heavily skewed toward weapons and drugs. Light arms from Cambodia are transited through the Kingdom of Thailand. The Kingdom is an attractive location for arms smugglers because of its proximity to Cambodia, a long and weakly policed border, and the willingness of authorities to accept payments to look the other way. Weapons smuggled through Thailand find their way to terrorists in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and elsewhere. Some weapons are smuggled to Southern Thailand, where they will be used by Muslim separatists. Other weapons will be transited to the North of Thailand, where they will be used in the war in Myanmar. The Myanmar conflict is a premier example of the overlap between transnational crime and terror. The country is home to the world's oldest ongoing conflict, as multiple ethnic armies are fighting against the government and sometimes against each other. These ethnic resistance armies have been identified as terrorist organizations. At the same time, many of these groups fund their activities through the sale of methamphetamine and opium, which is moved through Thailand. Opium warlord Khun Sa (1934-2007) was at once the leader of a resistance army and one of the world's largest drug traffickers.

Al Qaeda

From 2000 to 2010, Al Qaeda operated in Europe, with operations in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. In these countries, Al Qaeda established successful relationships with organized crime networks, like Camorra and Ndrangheta, to smuggle diamonds and weapons, while affiliated and independent cells engaged in petty crime such as credit card fraud and drug sales. Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in Europe, such as the 2015 attack on the editorial offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, were carried out using weapons from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

The Taliban

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium poppies, accounting for up to 80 percent of global production. In 2021, opium production accounted for between 9 and 14 percent of the country's GDP. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, coupled with the ensuing economic sanctions, have reduced international aid money and loans flowing into the country and removed nearly any hope of trade and investment, except from China and a few other countries willing to ignore sanctions. Consequently, opium production has become more important. It is now the primary source of income for the Taliban. The Taliban also produce methamphetamine which they smuggle through Russia and Pakistan with the help of other terrorist organizations.

Hezbollah

Analysts know there is cooperation between transnational terrorists and transnational criminal organizations, including Hezbollah, but the extent and exact nature of this cooperation has been difficult

to pinpoint. Arguably, Hezbollah is the most globalized terrorist organization. The group has been linked to pornography, contraband cigarettes, and various forms of fraud, used to fund the group's terror operations. Although the proceeds flow back to Hezbollah's headquarters in Southern Lebanon's Shiite community, it has been difficult for law enforcement to quantify and to link to the group. Transnational terror organizations are often organized in nodes connected through other networks, obfuscating the connection with the headquarters. These nodes are able to function independently because of the high degree of trust and familial ties which bind them.

Working through networks of criminals and coerced Lebanese Shiite diaspora in Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Australia, and with state support from Iran, Hezbollah engages in the trafficking of drugs, arms, human beings, diamonds, counterfeit goods, and pharmaceuticals. Hezbollah launders money, while also engaging in financial, credit card, and passport fraud, as well as sham marriages, and intellectual property theft.

Hezbollah is actively engaged in criminal activity in Latin America, shipping tons of illicit goods from Colombia to Europe, including cocaine, luxury watches, and counterfeit goods. The cash is then transferred back to the Middle East, where it is used to finance Hezbollah's activities.

In 2016, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) uncovered a money laundering ring, linking Hezbollah and Colombian drug traffickers. Hezbollah was laundering Colombian drug money through Miami-based accounts. At the same time, Hezbollah associates were buying cocaine, weapons, and ammunition from cartels. In 2011, a Hezbollah member was charged with selling cocaine to the Zetas, a Mexican drug cartel. He was also charged with laundering money for the cartel and then funneling the profits of the laundering operations back to Hezbollah. In 2014, Brazilian authorities discovered that a domestic prison gang was providing protection for Lebanese inmates in exchange for Hezbollah facilitating the gang's access to international arms markets.

Hezbollah's criminal activity extends to the United States. In Charlotte, North Carolina, in the late 1990s, a group of Hezbollah-linked men, tied to each other by kinship, ran a complex criminal organization which engaged in credit card fraud, cigarette smuggling, and marriage and immigration fraud. The group also procured dual-use technology to be used by terrorists. At the same time that the Charlotte network was in operation, another Hezbollah network was operating out of Dearborn, Michigan and in New York State. The two groups cooperated in some of their criminal activities, with the Dearborn group purchasing cigarettes from the Charlotte group, while the Dearborn group also purchased cigarettes from other terrorist organizations.

The decentralized structure of international terror groups or criminal organizations presents significant obstacles for law enforcement agencies. Operating through individual cells, these groups have little to no knowledge of the members or activities of other cells, making it difficult to identify and disrupt their operations comprehensively. As law enforcement apprehends one cell, another emerges to fill its place, perpetuating the cycle of illicit activities. This decentralized nature poses a formidable challenge, as it requires law enforcement to constantly adapt their strategies and tactics in an ongoing battle against these groups.

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Our Biggest Errors in Afghanistan and What We Should Learn from Them

By Linda Robinson
Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230706-our-biggest-errors-in-afghanistan-and-what-we-should-learn-from-them

July 06 – The Afghanistan War Commission, created by Congress, will shortly commence its investigation of U.S. policies in the twenty-year War in Afghanistan. So far this year, most headlines have been generated by a separate House Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into the Biden administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. This searing denouement resembled the chaotic end of the Vietnam War, complete with images of desperate Afghans clinging to planes lifting off from Kabul Airport as bearded Taliban soldiers seized government offices, tanks, and guns. The tragedy continued as the dark curtain of Taliban rule fell over the South Asian nation, bringing back the draconian Deobandi Islamic [PDF] practices of the 1990s. Overnight, Afghan women lost the right to work and to appear in

public, and those who resisted received harsh punishments. The turbaned Taliban leaders ejected women from the government and banned girls from school after sixth grade. Poverty, hunger, and maternal and infant mortality have spiked, as countries have withheld recognition of the Taliban regime, frozen funds, and suspended all but humanitarian aid. The Taliban's latest punishment bans Afghan women from UN work, where they are vital to delivery of aid in this conservative, largely rural country.

As frightful as these recent events are, they should not overshadow the full mandate of the commission, which is charged with conducting a "comprehensive review of key decisions related to U.S. military, intelligence, foreign assistance, and diplomatic involvement in Afghanistan from June 2001 to August 2021." The initial intervention, precipitated by the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, aimed to hunt down the al-Qaeda perpetrators. Over time it morphed into an effort to quell a persistent insurgency by building a stable democracy and improving living conditions in one of the poorest countries in the world—one that the British had unsuccessfully sought to pacify in two nineteenth-century wars.

Americans deserve a full and thoughtful accounting of the $2.3 trillion investment of military and development aid and the deployment of hundreds of thousands of U.S. and coalition troops. Why did the Afghan government and military collapse so quickly? Was the effort misguided from the start, based on flawed assumptions and policy design? What missteps were made along the way? What are the applicable lessons for other efforts to support democracy around the world? As a journalist, book author, and sometime adviser with frequent visits to Afghanistan between 2002 and 2015, I offer this distillation of lessons that we might learn from the United States' longest war.

However dramatic it appeared, the collapse of the Afghan government and military was not surprising. The seeds of defeat were planted long before President Joe Biden ordered the withdrawal. His predecessor, Donald Trump, signed an accord with the Taliban [PDF] in February 2020 that set a 2021 withdrawal date and decoupled the U.S. departure from any agreement to end the fighting among Afghans—thereby ceding the primary source of leverage. Afghan morale plummeted. Negotiations to reach a political settlement were never the central priority at any point in the war, as ephemeral military targets or "conditions" substituted for hardheaded recognition that there were in essence two Afghanistans, and that the Taliban always controlled most of the rural one (where I spent most of my time). Compounding this error, the U.S. government sought to implement centralized models of governance and military institutions that were inappropriate, imperfectly realized, and expensive to sustain. Finally, the United States and its allies set aspirational goals for societal transformation that could not be achieved on a relatively slim support base of urbanized, educated Afghans.

In sum, the American project was not based in a clear understanding of the realities of Afghanistan. Well-meaning Americans believed that they could persuade, cajole, or force a project that much of the population did not actively embrace or participate in. A chain of discrete policy errors flowed from this basic failure to adequately understand the country. Several fundamental lessons emerge from scrutinizing these errors in the design and execution of political, diplomatic, military, and economic policies.

Lesson 1. *Political conflicts usually require negotiated settlements rather than purely military solutions.* Attrition strategies and pressure campaigns unlinked to political strategies were bound to fail in an insurgency such as the War in Afghanistan, which was essentially a civil war between the Taliban and their supporters and the rest of the population. The Taliban were unlikely to be defeated militarily given their proficiency at low-cost insurgency. They have a base and a constituency: nationalistic, religious, and conservative Pashtuns who embraced the extreme Deobandi school of Islam that had spread among Pashtuns since the 1970s. Deobandi madrassas continued to indoctrinate young Afghan men to fight the infidel Americans. The continued U.S. emphasis on attrition warfare and civilian casualties from airstrikes caused enormous friction with the Afghan government and population. No clear military advantage was obtained from this approach, and policymakers failed to appreciate that these political costs outweighed any temporary military gain. Indeed, the U.S. government doubled down on the attrition warfare approach in the final years of the conflict. Civilian casualties from airstrikes increased by 330 percent after 2016.

Lesson 2. *Settlements to conflicts should be negotiated from a position of maximum leverage.* Two squandered opportunities to reach an agreement stand out. The U.S. government might have offered talks after ousting the Taliban in October 2001. Indeed, the Taliban offered to negotiate in those early days, but the United States did not invite them to Bonn, where the Bonn Agreement was reached and the new government was formed. In the heat of the post-9/11 furor, few U.S. officials were prepared to make a distinction between the al-Qaeda attackers and the Afghan Taliban who swore loyalty to bin Ladin but had no designs to attack America. The United States and the international coalition stayed, and then grew after the Taliban went on the offensive. The second opportunity occurred with the surge of coalition troops in 2011–13, which achieved what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford termed a "strategic stalemate" [PDF]. That high point of leverage was not seized to achieve a settlement, however, and the leverage began to erode as troops drew down. The Afghan government's position steadily weakened, and it became apparent that the army the United States built had not become a self-sufficient force capable of securing the country despite billions of dollars in investment. President Trump arrived in office determined to get out and set a minimal condition in 2020 in exchange for a U.S. exit pledge: that the Taliban agree

to commence talks with its Afghan opponents. With the U.S. departure in writing, the Taliban had no incentive to negotiate seriously. Without intensive U.S. and international support, the fractured Afghan government, riven by ethnic divisions between the Tajik-Uzbek minority and the Pashtun majority, could not reach a settlement on its own.

Lesson 3. *Be wary of imposing political systems that are inappropriate to a country's history and political culture; incremental approaches will be needed where democratic traditions are weak.* In Afghanistan, informal but real power rested with regionally based powerbrokers or warlords, such as Mohammed Qasim Fahim, Gul Agha Sherzai, Atta Mohammed Noor, Abdul Rashid Dostum, Ismail Khan, and the Karzai brothers, who held sway over the principal ethnic and tribal factions. Given their influence, a centralized form of government was unlikely to provide stability: every presidential election was a crisis that gave rise to protracted battles that required brokered outcomes. The trappings and mechanics of democracy were in place, but the culture of democracy remained lightly implanted. While women did make nominal gains in representation through seats reserved in parliament, ministerial positions in the cabinet, and mayoral appointments, these concessions were easily reversed without wider and deeper forms of equality taking hold in the society and culture. Civil society blossomed in urban Afghanistan, but rural Afghanistan remained much the same, as I was frequently reminded by villagers. More robust use of local councils and traditional shuras was needed to build consensus from the ground up and encourage fuller representation over time.

Lesson 4. *Do not seek to impose inappropriate security institutions, but rather build on traditional forms of defense.* A similar error occurred in the security sector. The United States modelled the Afghan military [PDF] on its own, with a centralized structure, capital-intensive equipment, and aircraft that Congress required to be U.S.-made—even though Afghans were used to Russian-made helicopters and planes that were much easier to maintain. Centralized logistics systems were not adapted to the country's rugged terrain. Vast resources were expended in creating a large standing force that required constant recruitment and replenishment due to casualties and desertion. Experiments in creating local defense forces offered an alternative that could have become the primary model for most of the country's defenses. These forces were recruited with support from local elders and deployed locally, as militias traditionally had been. Despite successes by the local forces, the juggernaut of creating an expensive, centralized army continued and, in the end, failed. The lack of support to troops in the field was a principal cause of the rapid dissolution of the army in 2021.

Lesson 5. *Do not overestimate the pace and depth of societal change that policies can produce within a generation; acceptable and financially sustainable targets are best set by the country.* Younger and more urban Afghans embraced the vision of a modern, democratic country, even as social norms remained comparatively conservative, but 74 percent of Afghanistan's population is rural— and deeply conservative. Remote areas remained untouched by many of the development projects funded by the United States, and many schools and clinics became goat sheds for lack of teachers and nurses. Important gains like reduced maternal and infant mortality and expanded access to education were achieved, but they were dependent on ongoing infusions of outside aid: 75 percent of the Afghan government budget came from foreign aid, and self-sufficiency was a distant prospect. Sustainable progress requires a growing economy to support these investments and durable, broad-based national support. Women are an untapped resource in Afghanistan, but the social and economic foundations for women's equality remain tenuous despite the educational, professional, and business achievements in the past twenty years. The pace of change is generational, and in the case of Afghanistan a concerted effort to diminish Taliban influence in the next generation will be required to restore forward movement.

Lesson 6. *Do not design policies that require indefinite or permanent multibillion dollar foreign assistance commitments, especially when no vital national interest is at stake.* The U.S. public proved remarkably tolerant of the twenty-year expenditure of $2.3 trillion in Afghanistan, but it was unlikely to support such a cost indefinitely without more progress toward sustainability. The national security rationale for indefinitely supporting Afghanistan at those levels diminished as the al-Qaeda threat receded. The waning terrorist threat from al-Qaeda and the nonexistent threat from the Taliban should have been factored into planning for an exit at the time of the 2011 surge. Quite frankly, plans for a continued U.S. military deployment did not align with U.S. national interests, and the small footprint envisioned would have been insufficient to fend off the growing threat from the Taliban as they extended their hold in the countryside from 2013 on. The risks of keeping a small force in Afghanistan would have progressively grown.

Lesson 7. *Halting mission creep is never easy, but the U.S. Congress should be readier to impose conditions and limits on foreign interventions.* Congress, with its power of the purse, is best positioned to end interventions outright, or at a minimum require an overhaul of policy objectives so that they are realistic. The Afghanistan experience underscores the need for stabilization and governance policy design based on the local culture and capabilities, with objectives that are modest, clear, and finite. Successive administrations bought into the military mantra of "conditions-based" withdrawals without recognizing or acknowledging that the conditions sought were not achievable. Year after year, U.S. generals continued to testify with ill-founded optimism to justify requests for multibillion dollar annual infusions of assistance. Greater rigor must be introduced into the criteria for ending interventions and continuous counterterrorism operations, and Congress must assert its power to end policies that are not working.

ICI C²BRNE DIARY – July 2023

A no-holds-barred account of the various shortcomings of U.S. policy in the longest war in American history is vital for the historical record and to inform future foreign policy to secure U.S. interests and determine how best to help countries in need. A frank and full report from the Afghanistan War Commission would include numerous "never again" resolutions that target these chronic lapses. If sufficiently bold, the report can galvanize more members of Congress to probe claims of national security necessity and imminent progress with greater skepticism, without fear of being labeled weak. A foreign policy that achieves demonstrable if incremental results, with a prospect of becoming self-sustaining, constitutes a desirable middle ground between overreach and isolationism.

Linda Robinson is Senior Fellow for Women and Foreign Policy at *CFR*.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: *In sum, the American project was not based on a clear understanding of the realities of Afghanistan. As* if Americans experience a clear understanding of all wars involved and lost. No lessons learned; just problems identified.

China: 6 dead, 1 injured in kindergarten stabbing

Source: https://www.livemint.com/news/world/china-6-dead-1-injured-in-kindergarten-stabbing-11688962309008.html

July 10 – Six people have been killed and one injured in a stabbing in a kindergarten in China's south-eastern Guangdong province, a BBC news report cited.A 25-year-old man have been arrested in the case and police is currently investigating the cause of the attack. They have called it a case of 'intentional assault', however, no further details were divulged. The attacked happened on Monday morning. "The victims include one teacher, two parents and three students... and one suspect has been arrested," a spokeswoman for the city government said.

China reported kindergarten stabbing last year

Last year, three people were killed and six others wounded in another knife attack at a kindergarten in southeast China's Jiangxi province. As per as AFP report, a "gangster wearing a cap and mask" stormed the private kindergarten and caused the attack.
In another similar attack in April 2022, two children were killed, and 16 others wounded when a knife-wielding man entered a kindergarten in southern China. Violent crime is rare in China, due in part to strict gun controls and tight security, but in recent years there have been several knife and axe attacks, including in schools. Around 100 children and adults have been killed and hundreds more injured over the past decade in apparently uncoordinated, "lone wolf" attacks, a Reuters report had previous cited.
According to a report by The Straits Times, experts in China have pointed to "anxieties caused by social upheaval and persistent inequality in explaining the attacks". Similarly, **The New York Times says assailants are sometimes said to be "trying to vent anger at society over issues such as unemployment".**

EDITOR'S COMMENT: What a stupid conclusion from a respected newspaper (NYT) – so, you are unemployed, and you go and stub children. The incident is tragic, and it deserves seriousness and death penalty.

Terrorists Diverge on Meaning of 'Martyrdom' as DVEs Use Incarcerated Mass Killers to Recruit, Incite
By Bridget Johnson
Source: https://www.hstoday.us/featured/terrorists-diverge-on-meaning-of-martyrdom-as-dves-use-incarcerated-mass-killers-to-recruit-incite/
July 11 – After the 2021 mass shooting at the King Soopers market in Boulder, Colo., al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula seized on the attack — despite no terrorism motive alleged by prosecutors — to shape one of their "Inspire: Praise & Guide" postmortem analyses. In addition to reviewing "features and merits of the operation" including target and weapon selection, AQAP gave tips on how they thought the attack could have been better executed — expressing their displeasure with what they hoped would be a "martyrdom" operation that instead ended with the accused shooter in handcuffs. "When you work for any operation, always have in your mind the determination to clash until the end with the police and with the enemy and to not surrender to them until death, and for that, take your precautions in terms of ammunition," al-Qaeda advised.
The Islamist extremist discouragement of attacks ending in arrest has been twofold: desiring a "martyr" whom they can lionize as a jihadist who killed until his last breath (thus becoming a propaganda poster boy to inspire future attackers), or desiring a repeat offender who can escape the scene of an attack and

wage a repetitive campaign of terror while leaving some sort of indication that the attacks are being committed in the name of ISIS or al-Qaeda. ISIS, for example, in an issue of its *Rumiyah* magazine suggested that would-be jihadists conduct knife attacks on random soft targets such as a person strolling on a beach or leaving a bar late at night, with the assailant fleeing and waging a "thousand cuts" campaign of terror single murder by single murder. And while the terror group ecstatically promoted the crimes of the Pulse nightclub mass shooter — and, for a time, desperately tried to claim the mass murders of the Las Vegas shooter with no known terror motive — they clearly have showed their disdain for jihadists whose crimes ended in capture. After Sayfullo Saipov killed eight people along a New York City bike path in a 2017 truck attack (a method heavily encouraged by ISIS after the 2016 Nice cargo truck attack, though Saipov chose a rented pickup) and was arrested while brandishing a paintball gun, his attack was mentioned back on page 3 of ISIS' weekly a*l-Naba* newsletter. After Akayed Ullah killed no one when he detonated a pipe bomb in an NYC subway tunnel in 2017, and was arrested lying on the ground at the site of the IED blast, ISIS bumped news of his attack to page 11 of a 12-page *al-Naba* issue.

Domestic violent extremists, though, have a track record of arrest after mass attacks. In some instances it's expected by the killers, and across the board it's utilized by those hoping to inspire similar terrorist activity.

Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people in the 2011 Norway attacks, was arrested during his attack on Utøya island. Dylann Roof, who killed nine people at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., in 2015, was arrested by police in a traffic stop the morning after the attack. Robert Bowers, who killed 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, engaged in a gun battle with responding officers before hiding and eventually surrendering. Brenton Tarrant, who killed 51 people in his 2019 attacks on two New Zealand mosques, was arrested on his way to a third mosque. John Earnest, who killed a member of the Chabad of Poway in his 2019 synagogue attack, was arrested two miles from the scene. Philip Manshaus, who killed his stepsister before opening fire at an Oslo mosque in 2019, was subdued and held for police by mosque elders before he could kill anyone there. Stephan Balliet, who tried to get inside a synagogue in Germany and killed two people nearby in 2019, was arrested about 30 miles from the scene. Payton Gendron, who received 11 consecutive life sentences in February after pleading guilty to his 2022 attack at the Tops market in Buffalo, was arrested during the mass shooting.

And Patrick Crusius, who was sentenced to 90 consecutive life sentences last week for killing 23 people in his 2019 attack on an El Paso Walmart, surrendered to law enforcement near the store. He pleaded guilty to all federal charges in February; his trial had been expected to start in January 2024. "Capture in this case if [sic] far worse than dying during the shooting because I'll get the death penalty anyway," Crusius wrote in his manifesto that he uploaded online just before his attack. "Worse still is that I would live knowing that my family despises me. This is why I'm not going to surrender even if I run out of ammo. If I'm captured, it will be because I was subdued somehow."

Out of those considered "disciples" of Tarrant by accelerationist white supremacists — Crusius, Earnest, Manshaus, Balliet, Gendron, and Bratislava LGBTQ bar shooter Juraj Krajčík — only one, Krajčík, killed himself before arrest. While domestic violent extremists don't consider arrest an optimal conclusion to an attack — some online have referred to imprisonment of one of their own as a "waste" of a white man whose work toward their cause is now halted — and, like ISIS, want their fighters to be able to conduct subsequent attacks, they also don't dock an assailant's crimes or the importance to their cause based on an arrest or guilty plea. *The Hard Reset*, a 261-page accelerationist guide released last year, even includes a page encouraging lone actors to consider "optics" of their appearance as "the day is coming where your face is gonna be on the news in the form of a mugshot or an obituary."

"I often look at myself in the mirror, thinking 'if the pigs came knocking right now, how would my photo look on CNN? How would it look on my very own wikipedia article? On my Saint Card?'," the anonymously authored page states. "There's no need for our guys to look like they held up a liquor store and got shot on the way out." Would-be attackers were further told to look like Manshaus instead of Parkland school shooter Nikolas Cruz.

In his manifesto, Gendron detailed his plan to shoot randomly at Black people on the street after the mass shooting at the supermarket. "I should be stopped by police officers eventually in Emslie and then surrender to them," he wrote. "Or if I find another decent location the day of the attack (example being Walmart) I'll head there." Tarrant wrote in his manifesto that dying during the attack was a "definite possibility" but he intended to survive. "Survival was a better alternative to death in order to further spread my ideals by media coverage and to deplete resources from the state by my own imprisonment," he wrote. Breivik said at his trial that "the certainty of my imprisonment does not frighten me." Earnest wrote in his manifesto that he would "rather die in glory or spend the rest of my life in prison" than fail to attack Jews.

While Islamist extremists have been known to deduct some credit for their adherents who get arrested, domestic violent extremists have found certain propaganda, recruitment, and incitement benefits in mass shooters who were captured alive:

Unambiguous attribution

Mass shootings that end with the perpetrator committing suicide or being killed by law enforcement or bystanders can leave murky questions about motive, with the exception of killers like Krajčík who left behind a manifesto. While all terrorist movements encourage the use of GoPro cameras to livestream an attack as Tarrant and Gendron did, ISIS and al-Qaeda both have expressed concerns to potential lone actors about their "martyrdom" happening without the requisite PR: AQAP has told would-be attackers to call media "informing them of the operation and its goal, so that they cannot conceal it," while ISIS publications have encouraged leaving a claim as rudimentary as scribbling a paean to the terror group on a wall near the site of an attack. When domestic violent extremists are arrested for their crimes and are potentially attached to a manifesto, livestream, online message boards, or statements made to the arresting officers — such as Bowers telling police "I just want to kill Jews" — extremist movements learn clearly if this killer is one of their "own" and can be heralded as such in propaganda and recruitment materials.

Guilty pleas

Domestic violent extremists want adherents committing an attack in the furtherance of white supremacist, accelerationist, ecofascist, sovereign citizen, or militia ideology — or some mix of these, along with other motivators such as anarchism or conspiracy theory extremism — to be proud of their actions or at the very least admit they pulled the trigger. Victims' families said that they doubted his sincerity after Gendron apologized at his sentencing hearing, claiming that he "did a terrible thing" and didn't "want anyone to be inspired by me and what I did." However, that has not noticeably affected the affection for Gendron and his crimes in online extremist forums.

Legal proceedings as a soapbox

Though judges who keep an orderly courtroom will do their best to limit the ability of accused shooters to use a trial for extremist outreach, killers have tried to use the intense public interest surrounding their legal proceedings as a soapbox to spread their views and be seen or heard by current fans as well as potential future followers. At his 2012 trial, Breivik declared himself "a representative of the Norwegian and European resistance movement" and — despite being chided by the judge several times — stated that "rivers of blood will run through the cities of Europe" in a future "purifying storm" as he called on "more patriots to shoulder responsibility, as I have done." At a parole hearing last year Breivik flashed Nazi salutes; Manshaus also took advantage of the courtroom cameras to raise his arm in a Nazi salute.

"Sainthood"

Accelerationist white supremacists bestow "sainthood" 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. The aforementioned killers all have been declared "saints" in this movement's online materials and even have "feast days." Much as Omar Mateen's image was used in endless ISIS incitement materials after his 2016 Pulse attack, the DVE "saints" are used in accelerationist memes, videos, and publications that encourage would-be attackers to join the "pantheon." These killers who have been arrested also result in a living person being attached to a manifesto that, despite the efforts of online censors, will still be circulating in some corner of the web. The aforementioned killers have often cited each other as inspirations; Krajčík stated in his manifesto, for example, that his "two inspirations to carry out an operation" were Tarrant and Earnest — but the "final nail in the coffin" was Gendron, who "gave me the final nudge."

Motivation to accelerate

Accelerationists whose raison d'être is to hasten societal collapse believe that, in a lawless post-collapse society, their comrades will no longer be imprisoned. "When this revolution starts gaining traction (if I am not killed) I expect to be freed from prison and continue the fight," Earnest wrote in his manifesto. This belief can serve as motivation for killers who think that if they do happen to land behind bars they won't be there forever, and for extremists who believe that part of their duty is to liberate domestic terrorists aligned with their cause.

According to the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center's *Mass Attacks in Public Spaces 2016-2020* report, which studied 173 attacks that resulted in 513 deaths, 99 of these incidents ended with the attacker's arrest. Domestic violent extremists may see that incarceration as offering more benefits than their Islamist extremist counterparts — and will still consider the mass killer behind bars a "martyr" as his image and words are used to recruit and incite future attacks.

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.

Here's The Real Reason You Need to Take Your Laptop Out at Airports

By Doug Drury
Source: https://www.sciencealert.com/heres-the-real-reason-you-need-to-take-your-laptop-out-at-airports

July 17 – Anyone who has travelled by air in the past ten years will know how stressful airports can be.

You didn't leave home as early as you should have. In the mad rush to get to your gate, the security screening seems to slow everything down. And to add insult to injury, you're met with the finicky request: "Laptops out of bags, please".

But what does your laptop have to do with security?

The day that changed air travel forever

Airport security changed dramatically after the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11 2001. Before 9/11, you could pass through security with a carry-on bag full of everything you might need for your holiday, including a knife with a four-inch blade. Indeed, that's how the 9/11 attackers brought their weapons on board.

After 9/11, screening processes around the world changed overnight. In the US, private security contractors being paid a minimum wage were swapped out for a federalised program with highly trained security personnel. Anything that could be considered a weapon was confiscated.

Around the world, travellers were suddenly required to remove their shoes, belts and outerwear, and take out their phones, laptops, liquids and anything else that could be used as part of an improvised explosive device.

This lasted for several years. Eventually, more advanced screening methods were developed to effectively identify certain threats. Today, some countries don't require you to remove your shoes when passing through security.

So why must you still take your laptop out?

Airport scanners have come a long way

The machine your bags and devices pass through is an X-ray machine.

The main reason you have to remove your laptop from your bag is because its battery and other mechanical components are too dense for X-rays to penetrate effectively – especially if the scanning system is old. The same goes for power cords and other devices such as tablets and cameras.

With these items in your bag, security officials can't use the screened image to determine whether a risk is present. They'll have to flag the bag for a physical search, which slows everything down. It's easier if all devices are removed in the first place.

A laptop inside a bag can also shield other items from view that may be dangerous. Scanning it separately reveals its internal components on the screen. In some cases you might be asked to turn it on to prove it's an actual working computer.

With newer multi-view scanning technology, security officials can view the bag from multiple angles to discern whether something is being covered up, or made to look like something else. For instance, people have tried to mix gun parts with other components in an effort to pass checked baggage screening.

Some airports have upgraded 3D scanning that allows travellers to pass their bags through security without having to remove their laptops. If you're not asked to take out your laptop, it's probably because one of these more expensive systems is being used. Nonetheless, amping up the technology won't remove the lag caused by airport screenings. Ultimately, the reason these are a major choke point is because of the speed at which staff scan the imagery (which dictates the speed of the conveyor belt).

Unless we find a way to automate the entire process and run it with minimal human supervision, you can expect delays.

What about body scanners?
But your bags aren't the only thing getting scanned at airport security. You are too!
The tall frame you walk through is a metal detector. Its purpose is to uncover any weapons or other illegal objects that may be concealed under your clothes. Airport metal detectors use non-ionising radiation, which means they don't emit X-rays.
The larger body scanners, on the other hand, are a type of X-ray machine. These can be active or passive, or a combination of both. Passive scanners simply detect the natural radiation emitted by your body and any objects that might be concealed. Active scanners emit low-energy radiation to create a scan of your body, which can then be analysed.
The kind of machine you walk through will depend on where in the world you are. For instance, one type of active body scanner that emits X-rays in what's called "backscatter technology" is used widely in the US, but is banned in Australia and the European Union, where only non-ionising technology can be used.
Another type of scanner emits lower-energy millimetre waves, instead of X-rays, to image the passenger. Millimetre wave frequencies are considered to be non-ionising radiation.

AI in our airports
AI seems to be all around us lately, and our airports are no exception. Advancements in AI systems stand to transform the future of airport security.
For now, human reviewers are required to identify potential threats in scanned images. However, what if an advanced AI was trained to do this using a database of images? It would do so in a fraction of the time.
Some airports are already using advanced computed tomography (CT) scanners to produce high-definition 3D imagery. In the future, this technology could be further enhanced by AI to detect threats at a much faster rate.
Hypothetically, CT scans could also be used for both humans and their baggage. Could this allow travellers to walk through a body scanner while carrying their bags? Possibly.
Until then, you should probably try your best to leave the house on time.

Doug Drury is Professor/Head of Aviation, CQUniversity Australia

Terror threat rising in UK as attackers become 'increasingly unpredictable' and harder to detect

Source: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-terror-threat-suella-braverman-attacks-b2377284.html

July 18 – The terrorist threat to Britain is rising as attackers become "increasingly unpredictable" and harder to detect, the home secretary has said.
Unveiling the government's new counter-terrorism strategy, Suella Braverman said threats had become "more diverse, dynamic and complex".
"We judge that the risk from terrorism is rising, albeit from a lower base and not as high as a few years ago," she told an event in Westminster.
"Terrorist attacks are becoming increasingly unpredictable, and harder to detect and investigate. Unlike in previous years, terrorist movements are increasingly fragmented and dispersed."
Ms Braverman said the types of threats were "more diverse, dynamic and complex", adding: "The terrorist threat is evolving and increasing, so we must also evolve to get ahead of it."
The home secretary said 39 plots had been foiled in a period where nine terror attacks had been launched in Britain, praising the work of the security services.
Home Office officials said they were working to address any potential threat from a record number of terror offenders being released from prison this year, through enhanced intelligence-sharing and monitoring.

ICI C²BRNE DIARY – July 2023

The head of UK counter terror policing, assistant commissioner Matt Jukes, previously said he was expecting one release a week and that those being freed included people "convicted of very serious offences" and plots in the 2000s.

The government's report said it had become more challenging to disrupt terrorist groups and potential attackers because of a shift away from organisations like Isis and al-Qaeda to lone actors and informal networks who operate mainly online.

At the same time, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and spread of Isis affiliates in parts of Africa has created a "permissive operating environment" for groups who may aspire to attack the UK again in future.

The government's new counter-terrorism strategy, Contest 2023, also warned that conspiracy theories that exploded during the Covid pandemic "can act as gateways to radicalised thinking and sometimes violence".

It also said the drivers of terrorism were broadening beyond "traditional narratives" to a mix of ideologies, personal grievances and mental health issues that made it increasingly difficult to judge a person's motivation.

Officials said that while incels could become a terror threat, only a small proportion are believed to be drawn to violence and attacks like the 2021 Plymouth shooting may not meet the legal definition of terrorism in the UK.

The report said jihadists still posed the largest threat to the UK, accounting for two thirds of attacks since 2018 and the terrorist offenders in prison, and three quarters of MI5's caseload.

The remainder of the UK domestic threat is "almost exclusively" from the far right, who were responsible for around a fifth of attacks in the past five years, 28 per cent of terrorist prisoners and a quarter of MI5's caseload.

The new Contest strategy aims to tackle the domestic terrorist risk, as well as the threat from jihadist groups overseas and the exploitation of technology to encourage, resource, instruct and glorify attacks.

"It is essential that we continue to understand the rapidly evolving technological landscape and maintain the agility required to reduce the terrorism risk as the world changes," it said.

"Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the fastest growing deep technologies in the world, with the potential to transform all areas of life within the UK and reshape the way entire industries operate.

"AI has implications for both our approach to counter-terrorism and the threats we face, with the potential for terrorist activity to become more sophisticated with less effort. While it could radically speed up the process of threat detection, terrorists are likely to exploit the technology to create and amplify radicalising content, propaganda and instructional materials, and to plan and commit attacks." The government said it was better connecting the counter-terrorism system with expertise in healthcare, education, social services and the criminal justice system, aiming to divert people away from extremism.

It has also vowed to act on the findings of a review of the Prevent counter-terrorism programme and the Manchester Arena inquiry, and implement a law mandating minimum protections for venues.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC TERRORISM
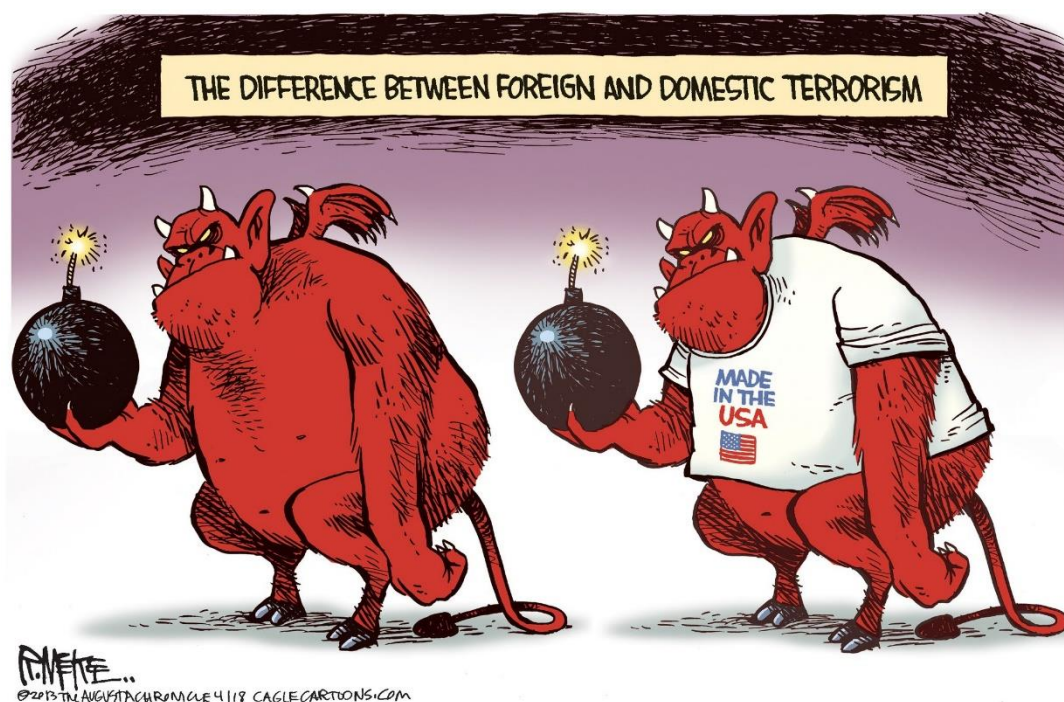
CHEM NEWS

New Report Warns Terrorists Could Cause Human Extinction With 'Spoiler Attacks'

By David Hambling

Source: https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhambling/2023/06/23/new-report-warns-terrorists-could-cause-human-extinction-with-spoiler-attacks/?ss=aerospace-defense

June 23 – A new paper published in the European Journal of Risk Regulation considers the danger from existential terrorism, defined as acts that threaten the existence of humanity. The authors highlight what they term 'spoiler attacks' involving AI or other new technology, which might enable a group with limited resources to cause unprecedented destruction.

"I don't expect existential terrorism to be at the top of global agendas, nor do I believe it should be," Zachary Kallenborn, one of the report's, authors told me. "But global discourse is clearly changing around existential risk."

Kallenborn is a Policy Fellow at the Schar School of Policy and Government, an officially proclaimed U.S. Army 'Mad Scientist', and a national security consultant. The paper is part of a special issue on long-term risks and special governance, with the unexpected effects of emerging technology being a key consideration.

Fire department officers moving into Kasumigaseki subway station (Tokyo) following a sarin gas attack by doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo. Future attacks might be far more deadly – AFP via Getty Images

Giga CBRNe challenges in giga-projects

April 2023
issue

"Technology is definitely bringing more power to the people," says Kallenborn. "The open question is how much capability is really needed to generate existential harm."

Kallenborn notes that unlike state actors, terrorist groups generally lack capacity to build effective weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear warheads. The best-known apocalyptic group, the Aum Shinrikyo cult, carried out several research projects including work on biological warfare. But they were forced to scale back their ambitions, and the cult's final effort was a nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 which caused fourteen deaths and affected thousands more. This was an appalling total, but still far short of the group's apocalyptic goal.

Rather than developing a superweapon themselves, a modern terrorist group could carry out a form of sabotage, a spoiler attack, to cause a cataclysm.

For example, terrorists could leverage the potential risks in advanced AI research, an area which which some warn carries "risk of extinction," and leading to calls for strict safeguards on research. Rather than building their own super-intelligent AI, terrorists might carry out a spoiler attack to break through the safeguards preventing an AI from being developed beyond a certain stage or released. This might be carried out remotely via hacking, on the spot by recruiting or subverting researchers, or by an armed intrusion into a research facility.

Spoiler attacks might also target biological research or nanotechnology projects, both areas where high levels of safeguarding are required. The authors note that new tools such as CRISPR, rapid DNA sequencing and DNA/RNA synthesis mean that there are now far more groups working on potentially hazardous biological projects. The unproven lab leak theory that COVID-19 escaped from a Chinese research facility could be a blueprint for a spoiler attack.

A spoiler attack breaching safeguards will not necessarily bring about the end of the world, or even cause casualties. A super-AI might be entirely benevolent, and a virus might be relatively harmless, or easily brought under control. Escaping nanotechnology might not bring about the sort of world-ending gray goo nightmare that technologists fear and commentators, including now-King Charles have warned about. But a spoiler attack is a low-cost approach with a small but significant chance of triggering a global catastrophe. It is a risk that governments need to be aware of.

"To combat existential terrorism, governments should focus on incorporating terrorism-related risks into broader existential risk mitigation efforts," says Kallenborn. "For example, when thinking about artificial super intelligence risks, governments should think about how terrorists might throw a wrench in their plans or simply ignore safeguards."

This is not so very different to the requirement that nuclear power stations need to be robust enough to withstand terrorist attack, except that the threat is broader and the stakes even higher.

"Governments should dedicate resources to more effectively characterizing and assessing the threat and response options," says Kallenborn. "That's not a big investment."

It might be argued that the risk of existential terror attacks has receded as millennial cults have now declined. The 90s saw a slew of such groups obsessed with the end of the world. In some cases these groups were involved with loss of life on a large scale, including Aum Shinrikyo, Heaven's Gate and the Branch Davidians. These days such groups much less visible, but that may be because they are now harder to recognize.

Gary Ackerman, an associate professor and associate dean at the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cybersecurity at the University at Albany and the report's other co-author, told me that the many of the conspiracy-minded, internet-based movements of today are modern incarnations of the same philosophies.

"There are several ideologies that foresee doom, whether these are environmentally-based or technology-based," says Ackerman. "A lot of the more modern movements are also more syncretic in that they tend to blend, often in a contradictory manner, a variety of strains of thought...Many of these groups are simply lumped in with all the other far-right extremist groups, when they actually have a much more apocalyptic outlook that encompasses many of the worldviews of previous cults."

As the paper notes, world-ending terrorists might be motivated by something other than religion, such as extreme environmentalism. The Voluntary Human Extinction Movement seeks to phase out humans, and it is a small step from there to genocide to save to planet. The authors also mention Strong Negative Utilitarianism, the philosophical view that human suffering can best be ended by ending humans.

Existential terror may sound like the stuff of Hollywood thrillers rather than real life, something for people to worry about in the far future. But it would be a mistake to ignore it.

"There are lots of uncertainties exactly when the threat might grow to something that is significant," says Ackerman. "But if we don't start at least thinking about it and monitoring the threat fairly regularly, it might be too late to do anything about it whenever the inflection point is reached."

Until recently, a global pandemic was also considered a theoretical risk, one which experts said was possible but only happened in the movies. Now we know how such threats can easily become reality, perhaps existential terrorism will get the attention it needs.

David Hambling is the author of 'Swarm Troopers: How small drones will conquer the world,' following cutting-edge military technology in general and robotic systems in particular.

Sulfur mustard

Me: Can ChatGPT create an antidote for mustard gas exposure?

ChatGPT

As an AI language model, I can provide information, but I am not capable of physically creating substances or antidotes. However, I can offer some information about mustard gas and potential treatments. Mustard gas, also known as sulfur mustard, is a highly toxic chemical warfare agent that can cause severe burns and damage to the respiratory system, skin, and eyes. Currently, there is no known specific antidote for mustard gas exposure. However, immediate decontamination and medical treatment can help minimize the effects and prevent further injury. The primary focus in treating mustard gas exposure involves decontamination and supportive care. Here are some general steps that should be taken if someone is exposed to mustard gas:

1. Remove contaminated clothing: It is essential to remove any clothing that has come into contact with mustard gas to prevent further exposure.
2. Rinse the affected area: Rinse the affected skin or eyes with copious amounts of water for at least 10 to 15 minutes to remove the chemical agent.
3. Seek medical attention: It is crucial to seek immediate medical attention after exposure to mustard gas. Medical professionals will assess the severity of the exposure and provide appropriate treatment.
4. Supportive care: Treatment may involve managing respiratory distress, administering pain relief, providing eye care, and addressing other symptoms. This may include oxygen therapy, analgesics, and supportive measures such as wound care.

It is important to note that the information provided is general and should not replace professional medical advice. If you or someone you know has been exposed to mustard gas, it is critical to contact emergency services or a healthcare professional immediately for appropriate guidance and treatment.

Me: Are there any drugs (in the market or experimental) that help eliminate the effects of sulfur mustard on human body?

ChatGPT

Currently, there are no specific drugs or antidotes approved for the complete elimination of the effects of sulfur mustard (mustard gas) on the human body. However, research and development efforts are ongoing to find effective treatments.

The primary focus in treating sulfur mustard exposure involves managing the symptoms and providing supportive care. Some medications and therapies may be used to address specific symptoms and complications resulting from exposure. For example:

1. Topical therapies: Various topical treatments, such as corticosteroids and antibiotics, may be used to manage skin injuries and prevent infection.
2. Respiratory support: Oxygen therapy and bronchodilators can help manage respiratory distress caused by sulfur mustard exposure.
3. Pain management: Analgesics (pain relievers) may be prescribed to alleviate pain associated with burns or other injuries.
4. Eye care: Lubricating eye drops or ointments can help soothe and protect the eyes from the effects of mustard gas exposure.

It's important to note that while some treatments aim to alleviate specific symptoms, they do not eliminate the long-term effects or reverse the damage caused by sulfur mustard. The best course of action is still to seek immediate medical attention and follow the guidance of healthcare professionals in managing the effects of exposure.

Researchers and scientists continue to explore potential therapies and antidotes for mustard gas exposure, but as of my knowledge cutoff in September 2021, no definitive breakthrough has been made in this area. It's possible that new developments may have occurred since then, so it's recommended to consult recent scientific literature or reach out to medical experts for the most up-to-date information on experimental treatments or clinical trials related to mustard gas exposure.

Me: What about glutathione, hydrogels or melatonin for sulfur mustard exposure?

(following a short search of mine on the Internet (Google)

ChatGPT

Glutathione, hydrogels, and melatonin have been explored in preclinical and experimental studies for their potential effects in mitigating the damage caused by sulfur mustard exposure. However, it's important to

note that their effectiveness and safety in human subjects are still being investigated, and they are not currently approved as specific treatments for mustard gas exposure.

1. Glutathione: Glutathione is an antioxidant molecule that plays a crucial role in protecting cells from oxidative damage. Some studies have suggested that glutathione may have potential benefits in mitigating the toxic effects of sulfur mustard. It has been explored as a therapeutic agent to counteract the oxidative stress and inflammation caused by mustard gas. However, more research is needed to determine its effectiveness and appropriate dosage in human subjects.

2. Hydrogels: Hydrogels are three-dimensional polymeric materials that can absorb and retain a significant amount of water. They have been investigated as potential delivery systems for various therapeutic agents. In the context of sulfur mustard exposure, hydrogels have been explored as vehicles for delivering drugs or agents that promote wound healing, reduce inflammation, and provide protective barriers against further exposure. However, the development and evaluation of hydrogels for mustard gas exposure are still in the experimental stage, and more research is required to determine their efficacy.

3. Melatonin: Melatonin is a hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle. It also possesses antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Some studies have indicated that melatonin may have protective effects against the toxic effects of sulfur mustard, such as reducing oxidative stress and inflammation. However, further research is needed to validate these findings and understand the optimal dosage and administration protocols for melatonin in the context of mustard gas exposure.

It's important to emphasize that while these substances have shown promise in experimental settings, their use as specific treatments for mustard gas exposure in humans requires rigorous clinical trials and regulatory approval. Therefore, it is crucial to rely on the guidance of healthcare professionals and scientific evidence when considering any potential treatments for mustard gas exposure.

Glutathione as an antidote for sulfur mustard poisoning: Mass spectrometric investigations of its potency as a chemical scavenger

By Markus Siegert, Andreas Kranawetvogl, Horst Thiermann, and Harald John

Abstract

The banned chemical warfare agent sulfur mustard (SM) still represents a serious threat to civilians and military personnel. Therefore, identification of antidotes and scavengers is of high concern. One promising substance is glutathione (GSH). GSH is known to mitigate symptoms of SM poisoning *in vitro* and *in vivo*. However, the mechanism of action remains unclear with respect to physiological impact as well as chemical scavenging by reaction between GSH and SM. Therefore, a novel *in vitro* method was used to characterize the scavenging potential of GSH. Accordingly, alkylation of human serum albumin (HSA), which represents an established biomarker for SM intoxication, was used as a measure for remaining SM. Coincubation of GSH and SM in human serum was performed, and time-dependent degradation of SM was monitored in the presence and absence of GSH. Protein-derived and small molecular reaction products between GSH, HSA, and SM were analyzed using microbore liquid chromatography-electrospray ionization high-resolution tandem-mass spectrometry. Although covalent modification of GSH by SM was observed, measurements clearly documented no significant reduction of SM concentration in the presence of GSH. Accordingly, beneficial therapeutic mechanisms of GSH in the case of SM poisoning would appear to be based on physiological effects than on chemical scavenging.

The Use of Hydrogel Dressings in Sulfur Mustard-Induced Skin and Ocular Wound Management

By Fanny Caffin, David Boccara and Christophe Piérard

Abstract

Over one century after its first military use on the battlefield, sulfur mustard (SM) remains a threatening agent. Due to the absence of an antidote and specific treatment, the management of SM-induced lesions, particularly on the skin and eyes, still represents a challenge. Current therapeutic management is mainly limited to symptomatic and supportive care, pain relief, and prevention of infectious complications. New

strategies are needed to accelerate healing and optimize the repair of the function and appearance of damaged tissues. Hydrogels have been shown to be suitable for healing severe burn wounds. Because the same gravity of lesions is observed in SM victims, hydrogels could be relevant dressings to improve wound healing of SM-induced skin and ocular injuries. In this article, we review how hydrogel dressings may be beneficial for improving the wound healing of SM-induced injuries, with special emphasis placed on their suitability as drug delivery devices on SM-induced skin and ocular lesions.

Melatonin as Modulator for Sulfur and Nitrogen Mustard-Induced Inflammation, Oxidative Stress and DNA Damage: Molecular Therapeutics

By Eva Ramos, Emilio Gil-Martín, Cristóbal De Los Ríos, et al.

Abstract

Sulfur and nitrogen mustards, bis(2-chloroethyl)sulfide and tertiary bis(2-chloroethyl) amines, respectively, are vesicant warfare agents with alkylating activity. Moreover, oxidative/nitrosative stress, inflammatory response induction, metalloproteinases activation, DNA damage or calcium disruption are some of the toxicological mechanisms of sulfur and nitrogen mustard-induced injury that affects the cell integrity and function. In this review, we not only propose melatonin as a therapeutic option in order to counteract and modulate several pathways involved in physiopathological mechanisms activated after exposure to mustards, but also for the first time, we predict whether metabolites of melatonin, cyclic-3-hydroxymelatonin, N1-acetyl-N2-formyl-5-methoxykynuramine, and N1-acetyl-5-methoxykynuramine could be capable of exerting a scavenger action and neutralize the toxic damage induced by these blister agents. NLRP3 inflammasome is activated in response to a wide variety of infectious stimuli or cellular stressors, however, although the precise mechanisms leading to activation are not known, mustards are postulated as activators. In this regard, melatonin, through its anti-inflammatory action and NLRP3 inflammasome modulation could exert a protective effect in the pathophysiology and management of sulfur and nitrogen mustard-induced injury. The ability of melatonin to attenuate sulfur and nitrogen mustard-induced toxicity and its high safety profile make melatonin a suitable molecule to be a part of medical countermeasures against blister agents poisoning in the near future.

Advances in treatment of acute sulfur mustard poisoning – a critical review

By Leila Etemad, Mohammad Moshiri and Mahdi Balali-Mood

Abstract

Sulfur mustard (SM) is a blistering chemical warfare agent that was used during the World War I and in the Iraq–Iran conflict. The aim of this paper is to discuss and critically review the published results of experiments on the treatment of SM poisoning based on our clinical and research experience. The victims must remove from the contaminated zone immediately. The best solution for decontamination is large amounts of water, using neutral soap and 0.5% sodium hypochlorite. Severely intoxicated patients should be treated according to advanced life support protocols and intensive care therapy for respiratory disorders and the chemical burn. Sodium thiosulfate infusion (100–500 mg/kg/min) should be started up to 60 min after SM exposure. However, N-acetyle cysteine (NAC) is recommended, none of them acts as specific or effective antidote. The important protective and conservative treatment of SM-induced pulmonary injuries include humidified oxygen, bronchodilators, NAC as muculytic, rehydration, mechanical ventilation, appropriate antibiotics and respiratory physiotherapy as clinically indicated. Treatment of acute SM ocular lesions start with topical antibiotics; preferably sulfacetamide eye drop, continue with lubricants, and artificial tears. Treatment for cutaneous injuries include: moist dressing; preferably with silver sulfadiazine cream, analgesic, anti-pruritic, physically debridement, debridase, Laser debridement, followed by skin autologous split-thickness therapy as clinically indicated. The new suggested medications and therapeutic approaches include: anti-inflammatory agents, Niacinamide, Silibinin, Calmodulin antagonists, Clobetasol, full-thickness skin grafting for skin injuries; Doxycycline; Bevacizumab, and Colchicine for ocular injuries. Recommended compounds based on animal studies include Niacinamide, Aprotinin, des-aspartate-angiotensin-I, Gamma-glutamyltransferase, vitamin E, and vitamin D. *In vitro* studies revealed that Dimethylthiourea, L-nitroarginine, Methyl-ester, Sodium pyruvate, Butylated hydroxyanisole, ethacrynic acid, and macrolide

antibiotics are effective. However, none of them, except macrolide antibiotics have been proved clinically. Avoidance of inappropriate polypharmacy is advisable.

Kentucky chemical weapons disposal program nearly done as US eliminates final stockpiles

Source: https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/kentucky-chemical-weapons-disposal-program-nearing-completion-us-99908380

Workers at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant in Richmond, Ky., begin the destruction of the first rocket from a stockpile of M55 rockets with GB nerve agent, July 6, 2022. The Kentucky facility built to dispose of deadly Cold War-era chemical weapons is nearing the end of its mission to destroy its 520-ton stockpile, a milestone that will likely mark the end of chemical weapons destruction projects in the U.S., officials said Wednesday, June 7, 2023. (U.S. Army via AP, File)

June 07 – A Kentucky facility built to dispose of deadly Cold War-era chemical weapons is nearing the end of its mission to destroy its 520-ton stockpile, a milestone that will likely mark the end of chemical weapons destruction projects in the U.S., officials said Wednesday.

The facility at the Blue Grass Army Depot is weeks away from eliminating the last of a stockpile of 51,000 M55 rockets with GB nerve agent that have been stored at the depot since the 1940s. The GB nerve agent, also known as sarin, a colorless and tasteless toxin, can cause respiratory failure leading to death. It is outlawed under international rules of warfare.

Another stockpile is being eliminated at an Army facility in Colorado, but that effort is expected to conclude before the Kentucky one.

The two sites have the country's last remaining chemical weapons that must be disposed of according to a 1997 worldwide treaty.

Military and civilian officials gathered Wednesday at Eastern Kentucky University to speak about the end of the project.

Kingston Reif, an assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense for Threat Reduction and Arms Control, said the destruction of the nation's deadly chemical weapons has been "decades in the making."

Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP)
Location: U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot, Colorado
Original Stockpile: 2,613 U.S. tons of mustard agent
Destruction Technologies:
Neutralization/Biotreatment
• Mustard agent in projectiles
Static Detonation Chamber (SDC) complex
• Problematic munitions and explosive components, including all 4.2-inch mortar rounds
Current Status: Main plant operations and SDC operations underway

Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP)
Location: Blue Grass Army Depot, Kentucky
Original Stockpile: 523 U.S. tons of nerve and blister agent
Destruction Technologies:
Neutralization
• Nerve agent in projectiles and rockets
Static Detonation Chamber (SDC) units
• Blister agent in projectiles
• Drained rocket warheads and overpacked rockets
Current Status: Main plant and SDC 2000 operations underway, SDC 1200 systemization underway

Anniston Field Office (AFO)
Location: Anniston Army Depot, Alabama

Program Executive Office, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (PEO ACWA) Headquarters:
Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland

"As recently as a few years ago, weren't could

we sure we achieve our treaty commitment, so the fact that we are now on the doorstep is no small feat," Reif said. He said all other nations who joined the treaty have finished destruction of their stockpiles.

Reif said the weapons are "heinous" and "the suffering they can inflict is unimaginable." "Which makes what's being done here in Kentucky all the more important," he said. Destruction of the Kentucky stockpile began in 2019 after decades of planning and debate over how to dispose of the deadly war weapons.

Workers at the Kentucky facility, the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant, separate the deadly chemicals from their original rocket or projectile casings and then eliminate the agent, in most cases using a process known as neutralization, where the chemical agent is dissolved in a solution. Kentucky originally had stockpiles of VX, GB and mustard agent that had been stored in bunkers for decades. The mustard agent was eliminated in 2021 and the final rocket containing VX agent was neutralized at the plant in April 2022.

The final phase of destroying the M55 rockets with sarin has been the most challenging, because of the age and deterioration of the rockets, said Candace Coyle, the plant's project manager. Each rocket carries about 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) of nerve agent.

The neutralization process was settled in 2006 after outcry from residents and environmental groups that objected to the weapons being burned to eliminate the deadly chemicals.

The weapons kept in Kentucky and an Army facility in Pueblo, Colorado, represent the last 10% of the nation's original stockpile of more than 30,000 tons (27,200 metric tons) of chemical weapons.

Chemical Weapons: Nation-State Targets

By Andy Oppenheimer
Source: https://nct-cbnw.com/chemical-weapons-nation-state-targets/

June 24 – How should we handle a nerve agent attack? Andy Oppenheimer looks back on the 2018 Novichok attacks in Salisbury and examines future challenges and possible responses if another similar incident should happen in the future.

In the ever-challenging field of CBRN weapons and defence, we have long been concerned by the threat of chemical weapons' use by terrorist groups and lone actors, especially since 9/11 and more recently, the Islamic State (ISIS). However, so far nation-states have been the perpetrators: most notable incidents are Syria's 300 bombardments of sarin and chlorine

on its own people between 2013 and 2018 and Russia's use of the nerve agent Novichok to assassinate or attempt to kill opponents of the regime.

Given that Russia is an increasingly hostile threat to the West, since its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and NATO's growing involvement in the war, there are fears that its totalitarian and ruthless leader will deploy chemical weapons in that theatre. Regardless, the overwhelming evidence of Russia's prior use of chemical weapons to target individuals deemed to be enemies of the Russian state is the focus of this article.

The latest Novichok target

Most recently, Novichok is suspected to have been used against Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who became seriously ill on a flight from Tomsk, Russia to Moscow on 20 August 2020. It was suspected that the nerve agent was slipped into a cup of tea at Tomsk airport. In addition, a German laboratory found traces of Novichok on a bottle of water in his Tomsk hotel room.

Navalny was treated in Omsk for three days before being put into a medically induced coma in The Charité Hospital in Berlin. He began a protracted recovery after he woke from coma on 7 September. Toxicology tests carried out in military laboratories in France and Sweden confirmed suspicions by German doctors treating him that a form of Novichok has been used.

Novichok: top of the scale

Novichok ('newcomer' in Russian) can be liquid or solid, dispersed as an ultra-fine powder. The symptoms can develop as rapidly as within 30 seconds of contact. It acts by inhibiting the enzyme cholinesterase, triggering the body's muscles into overdrive, including those controlling respiration. The Novichok group is believed to be eight times more toxic than VX, itself the most toxic of nerve agents that includes sarin, tabun and soman.
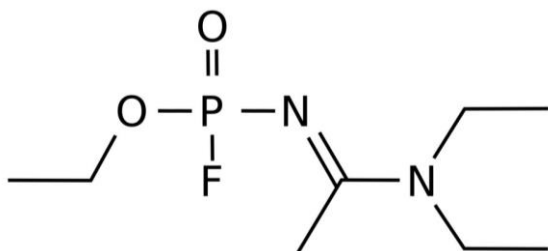
Structure of Novichok agent A234, ©Wikipedia

Absorption may also occur via the skin or mucous membranes, as in the Salisbury Skripal cases described below, however, dermal absorption produces a slower build-up of symptoms.

Novichok agents are known to have been developed secretly by the Soviet Union in the 1970s at the Shikhany military research establishment in central Russia, chiefly to evade normal chemical detection techniques and to penetrate chemical protection equipment on the battlefield.

Salisbury 2018: the Skripals

The most notorious example of Novichok use, specifically, to eliminate a Russian spy working for the British, took place on British soil, but failed. Then a further incident resulted in the death of a British citizen, who had nothing to do with spying.

●▶ **Read the full article at the source's URL.**

> **Andy Oppenheimer** is author of *IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets – A History of Deadly Ingenuity* (2008) and a former editor of *CBNW* and *Jane's NBC Defense.* He is a Member of the International Association of Bomb Technicians & Investigators and an Associate Member of the Institute of Explosives Engineers and has written and lectured on the IRA since 2002.

CBRNe Incident – A Complex Crime Scene Part II

By Mr. Kevin Cresswell
Source: https://nct-cbnw.com/cbrne-incident-a-complex-crime-scene-part-ii/

June 24 – "CBRNe decision making will eventually need to balance mission focus and forensic integrity with political/social priorities and the wider public health protection against time and cost constraints and conviction of any perpetrator."

In part one of two articles, Kevin Cresswell identified the need for first responders at a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high yield explosive (CBRNe) incident, to be trained in forensic principles to advance the subsequent investigation. In part two, he argues the case for forensic capability to be at the forefront of response and takes a look at how some countries are at the cutting edge of this CBRNe skillset.

Military operations in CBRNe environments are conducted using specific policies and procedures to minimize or negate CBRNe threats and hazards and continue the mission in the Operating Environment (OE). Prosecutorial evidence on the battlefield does not hold the same importance as those that occur inside the US, where support is likely carried out under different laws and authorities using different doctrine and partners, than similar operations conducted outside the country.

The US Department of Defense (DOD) CBRN Response Enterprise is structured to support the response to a CBRN incident in the US in support of civil authorities and is able to provide capabilities to manage the consequence of an explosion. The CBRN Response Enterprise does not maintain Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) capabilities (those related to the "e" in CBRNe).

Any CBRNe incident is a potential crime scene, therefore, first responders from agencies other than those with a 'law enforcement mindset,' need to treat it as such. It involves the use of different specialist equipment and techniques designed to recover forensic evidence under the most challenging and hazardous conditions.

The US has an impressive strategic CBRNe forensic and analysis capability. It allows trained CBRNe forensic investigators to deploy to the scene of a major incident, however, often only long after the first responders have arrived on scene. Where terrorism is suspected, it requires the use of specialist protective equipment and techniques using specialist, approved techniques to visualize, capture and recover digital and trace evidence, and gather information and intelligence as part of a what would now be a major crime investigation.

Often, however, this capability is not immediately available to the local crime scene investigation (CSI) level. Processing crime scenes that are suspected to involve CBRNe or other potentially hazardous materials requires the use of an amended organized and methodical approach to scene investigation, with an added consideration by first responders, both civil and military, of the subsequent conviction of the perpetrator.

When confronted with a dead body, you can visually appreciate that a death has occurred, time is on your side, the immediate aim is to discover 'how'. In the case of a CBRNe crime scene, this is not that simple:

What has happened? What are we up against? Is it hazardous or not and if it is how dangerous is it? What form does it take? You are not simply suiting up to prevent cross contamination, you suit up to protect your life.

●▶ **Read the full article at the source's URL.**

Kevin Cresswell is former UK Law enforcement and HM Armed Forces. He has worked in the Defense and Security sector for the last 15 years and is based in Los Angeles, California.

Aconitine

Source: https://www.bcemergencynetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Plants_Aconitine.pdf

In North America includes monkshood (Aconitum napellus), also called aconite, wolfsbane and helmet flower; mountain monkshood (A. delphinifolium), western monkshood (A. columbianum), wolfsbane (A. lycoctonum), and related species. Species used in Chinese

and Indian herbal medicine include A. carmichaeli (chuanwu) and A. kusnezoffii (caowu). Lateral root of A. carmichaeli is called fuzi and is less toxic than chuanwu. Genus Aconitum contains aconitine, mesaconitine and related alkaloids; concentrations vary from 0.3-2% in fresh tubers, 0.2-1.2% in fresh leaves and 1-2% in seeds. Delphinium and larkspur (genus Delphinium) contain aconitine-like alkaloids. Poisonings have resulted from ingestion of aconitine-containing herbal products or from mistaking leaves for parsley and roots for horseradish or celery. In herbal products, roots are soaked or boiled; alkaloid content of chaunwu and caowu samples has been reported to be 0.6% and 0.4%

Toxicity
Primary toxic effects include neurotoxicity (numbness, paresthesias) and cardiotoxicity (bradycardia, hypotension, dysrhythmias). Death is related to cardiac toxicity. CNS depression usually does not occur.

Mechanism of Toxicity
Aconitine and related alkaloids are neurotoxins and cardiotoxins, which act on the sodium channels of excitable membranes. Persistent activation of sodium channels prolongs the depolarization and prevents repolarization of membrane. Cardiac toxicity is manifested by enhanced automaticity which together with increased vagal tone and slowed atrial-ventricular conduction leads to dysrhythmias. Progressive muscular weakness is caused by depressed neuromuscular transmission. Aconitine stimulates the medullary centre of brain resulting in bradycardia and hypotension. Hyperventilation may be a central effect.
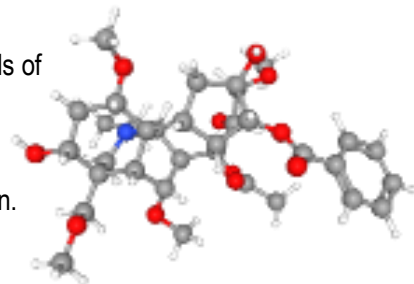
Toxic Dose
Lethal dose of pure aconitine in an adult is 3-6 mg. Severe poisoning has resulted from ingestion of 0.2 mg of aconitine. One gram of fresh Aconitum napellus contains from 2-20 mg of aconitine. Ingestion of 2-4 g of root has proven fatal.

Case Reports
Within 2 hours of ingesting aconite stem and leaves, a 61- year-old developed nausea, diarrhea, generalized discomfort and numbness of extremities. One hour later he developed hypotension (60/37 mmHg) and ventricular dysrhythmias which were refractory to cardioversion and antidysrhythmic therapy for 6 hours. Cerebral edema was diagnosed on day 5; patient died on day 6. Aconitine and related alkaloids were detected in urine. A 35-year-old drank a broth containing a variety of herbs including roots of Aconitum carmichaeli (chuanwu) and A. kusnezoffii (caowu), and within 90 minutes developed nausea, weakness and paresthesias of trunk and extremities. Four hours later, patient was alert and oriented with a HR of 73 beats/min and BP 115/70 mmHg. He had minimal proximal muscle weakness in all limbs; reflexes and sensation were normal. Gastric lavage was performed and activated charcoal administered. Patient vomited four times over next 5 hours. ECG showed a ventricular rate of 85 beats/min with frequent multifocal ectopics. Patient remained mildly hypotensive (95/50 mmHg) for about 10 hours. All symptoms gradually subsided by 40 hours post ingestion.

Pharmacokinetics
Limited data. Rapidly absorbed from oral and topical exposure. Onset of symptoms within minutes or delayed up to 2 hours after ingestion (may require 2-3 doses of herbal products before toxicity is seen). Cardiac symptoms usually begin within 6 hours post ingestion but may be delayed up to 24 hours. In severe cases, death has occurred in 1-6 hours (range: minutes to 6 days). Recovery in mild poisoning may be seen within 1.5-2 days; patients with cardiac toxicity from Chinese herbal products have required 7-9 days for recovery. Elimination half-life of aconitine was 3 hours in one patient. Aconitine is detectable in urine in over 90% of patients.

Clinical Effects
• Topical: Pruritus, erythema, vesicles. Dermatitis has been reported from occupational exposure. Possible systemic effects.
• Ingestion:
General: Symptoms generally begin with numbness and paresthesias in mouth and tongue. Nausea, vomiting, generalized paresthesias and muscle weakness may develop. Hypotension, bradycardia and ventricular ectopics are common. In serious cases, cardiac symptoms worsen. Death is primarily due to cardiac tachydysrhythmias and possibly respiratory paralysis. CNS depression usually does not occur.
HEENT: Burning or paresthesia of mouth, lips, tongue and face are seen early (common). Increased salivation. Miosis (may be seen early). Diplopia, blurred vision, yellow-green scotomata, lacrimation. Chewing a root may cause lip, tongue and mouth swelling.
CVS: Hypotension, chest pain or tightness, palpitations. Dysrhythmias can include bradycardia, supraventricular tachycardia, heart block, junctional rhythm, bidirectional tachycardia, ventricular ectopics, ventricular tachycardia or fibrillation (can be refractory), and torsades de pointes. Shock may develop. Cardiac arrest has occurred.
Respiratory: Dyspnea, hyperventilation, respiratory paralysis leading to failure; possible pulmonary edema.
Neurologic: Paresthesias in extremities (common, generally resolve within 24 hours). Agitation (common), headache, dizziness, ataxia, lethargy, coma (rare) and seizures (rare).

GI: Nausea (common), severe vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain. Fluids/Lytes/Acid-Base: Dehydration, hypokalemia from vomiting and diarrhea. Musculoskeletal: Muscle weakness (common).
Other: Chills, sweating.

Treatment
1. Topical: Wash skin thoroughly with soap and water. Observe for systemic symptoms. See Ingestion.
2. Ocular: Flush eyes with a gentle stream of tepid water for 5 minutes. Obtain ophthalmologic opinion if irritation persists.
3. Ingestion: Asymptomatic patients should have continuous cardiac monitoring and monitoring of vital signs for at least 6 hours. ECG should be performed on admission and prior to discharge. Symptomatic patients should be monitored until resolution of symptoms.
4. Administer activated charcoal in cases of recent ingestion.
5. Protect airway and assist ventilation as needed.
6. Maintain fluid and electrolyte balance.
7. Monitor vital signs and ECG.
8. Symptomatic bradycardia may be treated with atropine. Electrical pacing may be required.
9. Hypotension unresponsive to IV fluids may be treated with vasopressors.
10. Cardiac dysrhythmias have been reported to be difficult to treat. Direct current cardioversion is often ineffective. No antidysrhythmic agent has been consistently effective. Lidocaine has been unsuccessful in a number of patients, while flecainide, amiodarone and IV magnesium have been useful in some patients.
11. Charcoal hemoperfusion has been used in patients with refractory dysrhythmias; there are no data on efficacy of alkaloid removal.

Privacy by Design in CBRN Technologies Targeted to Vulnerable Groups: The Case of PROACTIVE

By Mariano Martín Zamorano, Natasha Newton, Virginia Bertelli and Laura Petersen

Abstract

This paper provides the results of the privacy impact assessment conducted for the PROACTIVE solutions and its subsequent privacy by design integration process. PROACTIVE is a solution for fostering coordination and communication between stakeholders before and during CBRNe events focusing on providing guidance to vulnerable populations. Based on extensive fieldwork activities with practitioners and vulnerable groups, the results of the analysis reveal the main risk focus, including the need to filter data by competent authorities (data controllers) and potential solutions for each of them, which allow establishing standard procedures for systems used in similar contexts.

Applicability of PROACTIVE recommendations on CBRNe risks and threats to passenger rail and metro sectors

By Laura Petersen, Grigore M. Havârneanu, Andreas Arnold, et al.

Abstract

Passenger rail and metro sectors are no stranger to malicious or unintentional Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and explosive (CBRNe) incidents. Over the last years, the EU H2020 Project PROACTIVE has developed recommendations based on a multimethodological approach which involved questionnaires, interviews and workshops with CBRNe practitioners and security experts. However, these recommendations are geared towards specialised first responders. With a particular focus on rail and metro, this paper examines the answers collected from railway and metro security experts during these research activities to see at which level the PROACTIVE recommendations are fit for these sectors. The

results show that some of the generic PROACTIVE recommendations for first responders are already being applied. For example, the recommendations regarding inter-agency collaboration appear to already be put in place. In contrast, other recommendations such as the ones on crisis communication and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in preparedness actions could be applicable since important gaps are present. We discuss the major gaps and how they could be filled in the future.

New venomous cocktails from cone snail have huge drug potential

Source: https://newatlas.com/biology/venomous-cone-snail-drugs/

Deadly display: An adult *Conus magus* makes easy work of their fish meal – Institute for Molecular Bioscience, University of Queensland

June 29 – In a world first, researchers have reared cone snails in a laboratory aquarium, which presents huge potential for understanding and unlocking the power of their complex venom for a vast range of human therapeutics.

It's estimated up to 1,000 different cone snail species exist, each with their own special recipe of venom. Each type of venom contains hundreds of compounds, so it's no surprise it's already of huge interest to scientists who have so far discovered the potential for painkillers, insulin regulation and more.

Now, the breakthrough of not just discovering a new venom but successfully rearing cone snails in a lab enables a more sustainable way of accessing their deadly **conotoxins** is a win for both drug development and biodiversity. And it's also enabled the University of Queensland (UQ) researchers to chart biological changes in the different life stages of the animals, including the makeup of their complex venom.

"Juvenile cone snails use a different cocktail of venoms than adult snails to kill their prey," said Richard Lewis professor at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience, UQ. "This is a rich and unexplored group of molecules that we can now examine as potential leads for drugs."

The mollusk at the center of it all is the *Conus magus*, or the magical cone/magician's cone, depending on who you ask. And it does appear to have a few tricks hidden in its juvenile and adult venom varieties.

As well as compounds involved in analgesics, the scientists discovered that peptides produced by the juveniles had the potential to block nicotinic acetylcholine receptors, which could lead to new therapies to help smokers quit.

1 mm

"A lot of our success with venom molecules has been in developing pain medications, but depending on the pharmacology we'll see if it has therapeutic potential for any of the disease classes," Lewis added.

The tiny juvenile cone snails have been reared in a lab for the first time – Institute for Molecular Bioscience, University of Queensland

While the snail is capable of stinging a human, the lethal strikes are left to their much larger relatives like the *Conus geographus*. That is, unless you're a fish (or, as the team discovered, a marine bristle worm).

The adults capture fish with a set of paralytic venom peptides and a hooked radular tooth that gives the jabbed fish no chance of escape. As juveniles, they "sting-and-stalk" polychaete worms, and their venom rapidly slows the prey so they can devour it without a struggle.

"They jab the worm with a harpoon-like structure before injecting it with venom to subdue it," Lewis said, of the activity you can see in a video below. "The juvenile snail then slowly stalks the worm and sucks it up, like a small piece of spaghetti."

The ability to rear the snails from eggs to adults, for the first time, has allowed scientists to get a crucial look at their molecular and morphological changes throughout their life cycle. While the snails are found throughout the Pacific and Indian oceans, and the Red Sea, little is known about their early life stages.

"This is because their eggs, larvae and juveniles are so hard to find and difficult to rear in an aquarium," Lewis said.

Now, the team – which also includes Aymeric Rogalski and Himaya Siddhihalu Wickrama Hewage – has a successful and sustainable population of these fascinating animals that present untapped medical potential.

The research was published in the journal *Nature Communications*, and check out the juvenile cone snail enjoying its worm 'spaghetti,' and the rare sight of an adult female laying eggs, in the videos below.

Conotoxins, which are peptides consisting of 10 to 30 amino acid residues, typically have one or more disulfide bonds. Conotoxins have a variety of mechanisms of actions, most of which have not been determined. However, it appears that many of these peptides modulate the activity of ion channels. Over the last few decades conotoxins have been the subject of pharmacological interest. The LD_{50} of conotoxin ranges from 5-25 µg/kg.

Schematic diagram of the three-dimensional structure of ω-conotoxin MVIIA (ziconotide). Disulfide bonds are shown in gold. - Wikipedia
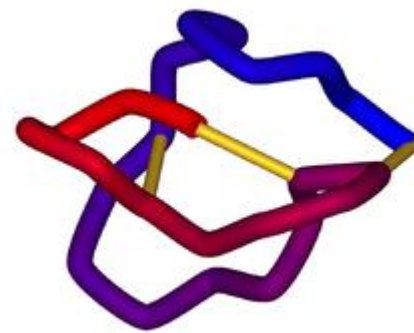
The number of conotoxins whose activities have been determined so far is five, and they are called the α(alpha)-, δ(delta)-, κ(kappa)-, μ(mu)-, and ω(omega)- types. Each of the five types of conotoxins attacks a different target:

- α-conotoxin inhibits nicotinic acetylcholine receptors at nerves and muscles.
- δ-conotoxin inhibits fast inactivation of voltage-dependent sodium channels.
- κ-conotoxin inhibits potassium channels.
- μ-conotoxin inhibits voltage-dependent sodium channels in muscles.

- ω-conotoxin inhibits N-type voltage-dependent calcium channels. Because N-type voltage-dependent calcium channels are related to algesia (sensitivity to pain) in the nervous system, ω-conotoxin has an analgesic effect: the effect of ω-conotoxin M VII A is 100 to 1000 times that of morphine. Therefore, a synthetic version of ω-conotoxin M VII A has found application as an analgesic drug ziconotide (Prialt).

US Arming ISIL in Syria with chemical weapons: Russian Intel

Source: https://en.mehrnews.com/news/202759/US-arming-ISIL-in-Syria-with-chemical-weapons-Russian-Intel

July 03 – The US handed over missiles with warheads filled with poisonous substances to ISIL terrorist organization in southern Syria, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) said on Monday.
"According to the information available in the SVR, the technique of their use was practiced in May in the Syrian province of Idlib by militants of the CIA-controlled local wing of Al-Qaeda. About 100 civilians were poisoned back then," the statement read.

The SVR stressed that the US had handed over "missiles with warheads filled with poisonous substances" to ISIL terrorist organization in southern Syria, according to Sputnik.
Deputy Commander of the US Central Command Vice Admiral James Malloy is responsible for such operations in southern Syria and the Damascus region, the SVR added.
"[US President Joe] Biden's team is doing everything to disrupt the Arab-Syrian normalization, to discredit the leadership of Syria. For this purpose, provocations are being prepared, including with the use of chemical poisonous substances," the statement added.

About a third of Syria remains occupied, including by the United States, which controls oil and food producing regions east of the Euphrates River. Washington holds military camps on these territories and trains the terrorists.
Syrian officials have slammed the US and its allies over the dirty war, and demanded that all foreign forces not explicitly invited by the Damascus government leave the country, and allow Syria to restore full control over its internationally recognized borders.

Defence weapons expert Dan Kaszeta legally challenges Government over decision to "no platform" him

Source: https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2023-news/defence-weapons-expert-dan-kaszeta-legally-challenges-government-over-decision-to-no-platform-him/

June 19 – Mr Kaszeta, an internationally renowned expert in defence against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons and warfare, and an Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, had his invitation to speak at the International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference cancelled a month before the event took place in London in May.
He was told he had been disinvited because a check on his social media made in accordance with the rules introduced in 2022 had identified material that criticised government officials or policy.

The check appears to fall under latest civil service guidance: Due Diligence and Impartiality - Supporting and Protecting our Diversity Networks, which Mr Kaszeta believes is unlawful. He also believes the application of the guidance in his case was unlawful.

The guidance was only published on 17 May 2023, a week before the chemical weapons conference and a month after Mr Kaszeta's invitation to the event was cancelled, after Cabinet Office Minister Jeremy Quinn MP explained in the House of Commons: "Taxpayers' money should not unwittingly be used to pay for speakers linked to abhorrent organisations or individuals who promote hate or discriminatory beliefs, which could bring the civil service into disrepute. . . there are certain abhorrent organisations that we should not pay or give a platform to a nd cause embarrassment to our civil service or our country."

Represented by law firm Leigh Day, Mr Kaszeta has written to The Cabinet Office and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) at Porton Down to signal the start of the judicial review process.

Leigh Day wrote: "We take it that neither DSTL nor the Cabinet Office considered or considers Mr Kaszeta to fall within the category of "abhorrent organisations or individuals who promote hate or discriminatory beliefs". Please confirm that Mr Kaszeta's invitation was not cancelled on the basis of any alleged extremist views or views that are inconsistent with diversity and inclusion."

The pre-action protocol letter points out that the Guidance requires civil servants to:

1. Remove extremist views when engaging external parties
2. Ensure the Civil Service is not associated reputationally with external parties
3. Ensure external parties are not campaigning on or influencing government policy
4. Ensure civil servants preserve their impartiality when engaging external parties

The civil service code says civil servants must "carry out your responsibilities in a way that is fair, just and equitable and reflects the Civil Service commitment to equality and diversity" and must not "act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests".

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Perhaps the best book on the market! Highly suggested!

Mr Kaszeta says the guidance and its application to him are unlawful. He argues that the guidance which only prevents those who are thought to have spoken "against key Government policies" from speaking to, or at events organised by civil servants and its application to him violate the civil service code and are irrational. They amount to direct discrimination on grounds of belief contrary to s.13 Equality Act 2010. They further amount to violations of Mr Kazeta's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and right to freedom of expression (protected by Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention respectively) both alone and when read with Article 14 (which prohibits discrimination).

The letter argues that there can be no possible justification for restricting Mr Kaszeta's rights in circumstances where his publicly expressed opinions could not conceivably be described as promoting "hate or discriminatory beliefs" and where those opinions bear no relevance to the subject matter of the conference which he was asked to address.

Leigh Day has asked for disclosure of all records relating to the decision to cancel Mr Kaszeta'sinvitation because of material on his social media, any equality assessment conducted and any earlier iterations of the Guidance. A response has been requested on an urgent basis by 23 June 2023. .

Dan Kaszeta said: "I am not seeking compensation. I am acting in the public interest. I am hoping that I can get this 'blacklisting' reversed and that this awful policy is removed.

Mr Kaszeta is represented by Leigh Day partner Tessa Gregory, who said: "Our client is a world
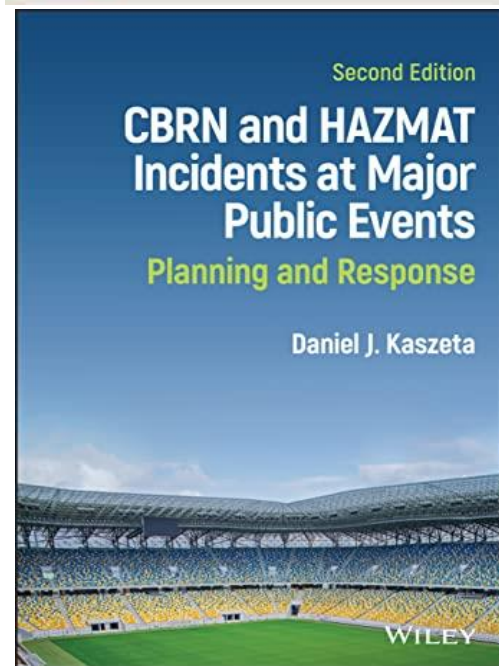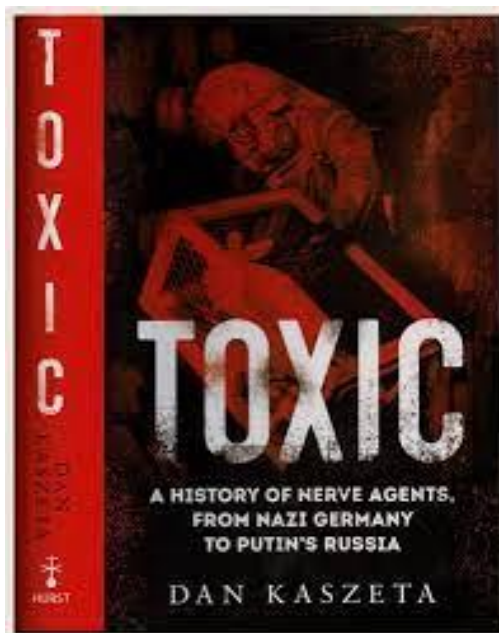
renowned expert in defence against chemical and nuclear weapons but the Government decided he should not address a civil service conference because on social media he criticised Government policy in an entirely unrelated field. We consider that this decision and the guidance applied is unlawful as it is discriminatory, a breach of his right to freedom of expression and irrational." Ben Collins KC of Old Square Chambers, Jane Russell of Essex Court and George Molyneaux of Blackstone Chambers are instructed. Mr Kaszeta is crowdfunding his case.

Russia Using Chemical Weapon During Bakhmut Artillery Bombardments, Ukrainian Official Claims

By Steve Brown and Stefan Korshak
Source: https://www.kyivpost.com/post/19108

July 05 – Russian forces are using chemical weapons against Ukrainian troops, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Defense Forces has claimed.

Col. Oleksiy Dmytrashkivsky said that following an artillery strike against Ukrainian positions near the Donbas city of Bakhmut, soldiers showed symptoms including nausea, vomiting and, in a few cases, loss of consciousness.

"During the artillery bombardments they use a chemical called lewisite," Dmytrashkivsky said in a video posted on social media.

Ukrainian chemical warfare specialists were still evaluating evidence and identification of lewisite as the chemical weapon used was preliminary, Dmyrtrashkivsky said.

By mid-afternoon on Tuesday Dmytrashkivsky's statement was rapidly going viral across Ukrainian mass media, but the claims had yet to be independently verified.

Kyiv Post spoke to a member of Ukraine's reserve forces who, speaking on background, said he was not surprised the alleged chemical attack had taken place.

Ukrainian army chemical weapons defense teams have trained continually since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) has always considered Russian chemical attack a real possibility, he said.

What is lewisite?

First used in combat during World War I, lewisite is a chemical compound commonly called vesicant or blistering agent, because it causes blistering on the skin and mucous membranes on contact.

In its pure form it appears as an oily, colorless liquid but when used in weapons its color can range from amber to black.

Lewisite is said to smell of geraniums. Its only use is as a chemical warfare agent, typically delivered by artillery shells or, less commonly, by aerial bombs. The compound has no other medical or practical use.

Signs and symptoms follow from exposure. These typically include:
- ✓ Skin pain and irritation within seconds of contact which will redden within 15 to 30 minutes then becoming blistered after several hours;
- ✓ Eyes will suffer immediate irritation, pain, swelling, and tearing on contact;
- ✓ Respiratory tract starts with runny nose which will quickly turn to sneezing, hoarseness, bloody nose, sinus pain, shortness of breath, and cough;
- ✓ Digestive tract will react with diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting after minutes or hours;
- ✓ Cardiovascular system will exhibit "lewisite shock," which appears as very low blood pressure.

Lewisite exposure treatment consists of cleaning the chemical from the body as soon as possible and administering medical care in a hospital setting.

An antidote for lewisite, called dimercaprol, and also known as **British Anti-Lewisite** (BAL), was invented during World War I.

The antidote BAL is administered by an intramuscular injection and, if given in sufficient time, will decrease the toxicity of the chemical in the body. The antidote will not repair damage to skin, eyes, or airways, which would require other medical intervention.

Reports of potential chemical weapons use in the war have cropped up intermittently but, thus far, without independent confirmation. The most widely reported incident took place in April 2022, when Ukrainian troops defending the Azovstal steel mill in the besieged city Mariupol reported Russian use of a gas
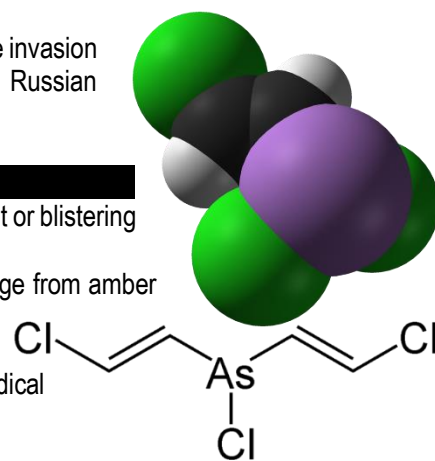
causing mucous irritation, asphyxiation and nausea. Ukrainian officials echoed the claim Russian artillery had used chemical weapons against Mariupol's defenders and gunners firing the shells were responsible for war crimes.

Moscow officials subsequently claimed the Russian military respects the rules of war and that allegations about chemical weapons use in Mariupol was Ukrainian or NATO propaganda. The chemical white phosphorus – an agent with the primary military uses of making smoke and setting fires, but fully capable of killing individuals by severe burns or asphyxiation – has been used by both sides in the war. Russian army general Sergei Surovikin, the commander of the Kremlin's brutal assault on Mariupol, and the senior officer in the Russian campaign to level the Syrian city Aleppo, in public statements described white phosphorus as an excellent weapon with which to reduce civilian structures and military defenses alike. Drone operators on both sides of the Russo-Ukrainian War have from time to time attempted attacks against enemy trenches using tear gas (CS) grenades. CS gas is not commonly used in grenade-drop drone attacks, due to the relatively small amount of CS gas in a grenade and more lethal results dropping conventional hand grenades or modified mortar shells. On Monday and Tuesday, officials in Kyiv and Moscow traded repeated accusations that the other side was preparing to use a weapon of mass destruction. The most common scenario was a nuclear incident following intentional destruction of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station, near the city Kakhovka, but some Russia-supporting information platforms predicted a chemical weapons-related incident.

On Tuesday, the Moscow-loyal Kherson Vestnik Telegram channel claimed the Ukrainian government intended to manufacture a chemical weapons incident using barrels of chlorine against unsuspecting Ukrainian troops. The platform did not offer evidence.

Chemical Weapons Convention

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is officially called the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*, came into into force on April 29, 1997. Per the treaty, holders of such weapons were obliged to commence verified destruction of all current chemical weapons, other than small amounts to be retained for testing or development of defensive countermeasures. All destruction activities were to take place under OPCW (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) verification. Currently 193 states, including Russia are signatories of the convention and have (supposedly) accepted their obligations to the treaty. Russia claimed to have destroyed the balance of its chemical weapons in 2017. British law enforcers and courtrooms have confirmed the Kremlin violated that commitment, at minimum, in March 2018 attacks against the former KGB officer, Sergei Skripal, in the UK city of Salisbury. The Kremlin denied wrongdoing. Prominent Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny in the Siberian city of Omsk in August 2020 was poisoned by the Russia-developed "Novichok" nerve agent. He survived. The Kremlin has denied responsibility for the attempted assassination. Moscow officials denied wrongdoing and claimed Navalny's illness was probably because of something he ate.

After a career as a British Army Ammunition Specialist and Bomb Disposal Officer, **Steve Brown** later worked in the fields of ammunition destruction, demining and explosive ordnance disposal with the UN and NATO. In 2017, after taking early retirement, he moved to Ukraine with his Ukrainian wife and two sons where he became a full-time writer. He now works as an English language editor with the Kyiv Post.
Stefan Korshak is the Kyiv Post Senior Defense Correspondent. He is from Houston Texas and is a Yalie. He has worked in journalism in the former Soviet space for more than twenty years, and from 2015-2019 he led patrols in the Mariupol sector for the OSCE monitoring mission in Donbass. He has filed field reports from five wars and enjoys reporting on nature, wildlife and the outdoors.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: A UK-US article (2/3 on lewisite and CWC/OPCW) based on Ukrainian claims but no proofs (so far) – usual staff in (proxy) war time…

A Neurotoxin Is Causing Sea Lions to Bite People in California

Source: https://www.sciencealert.com/a-neurotoxin-is-causing-sea-lions-to-bite-people-in-california

July 07 – More than a thousand Californian sea lions have been poisoned by a toxic algae bloom that can cause seizures, brain damage, and death.

Across California's beaches, sea lions have been exhibiting strange behaviors like swaying their heads back and forth, frothing at the mouth and being unusually violent when touched.

Sea lions aren't normally aggressive towards humans, but there have been at least five instances where sea lions have bitten beachgoers in recent weeks.

ICI C²BRNE DIARY – July 2023

They aren't intentionally attacking humans, says Alissa Deming, a vet at the Pacific Marine Mammal Center in Orange County. Biting is just a natural reflex when a sick, disorientated sea lion is spooked or bumps into something, she says.

Marine mammal rescuers in the area have received up to 300 reports a day of sea lions in distress, and 150 sea lions have been found dead. Wildlife rescuers have cordoned off areas with sick sea lions, cautioning the public not to move, pour water on, or disturb the animals in any way. People should stay about 50 feet (16 meters) away from unwell sea lions.

"About the length of a school bus is ideal," says the Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute. From there it is safe to observe the animal's behavior and report its exact location if the animal is showing signs of distress.

This catastrophe might be linked to an imbalance of nutrients in the ocean driven by the combined consequences of climate change and El Niño, as well as pollutants from human activities. In turn, microscopic marine plankton called pseudo-nitzschia surged in numbers – a phenomenon known as a 'red tide'.

Pseudo-nitzschia produces the powerful neurotoxin domoic acid. Fish gorge on the algae, and the neurotoxin accumulates in the food chain. Sea lions, which mostly feed off anchovies and sardines, are particularly vulnerable.
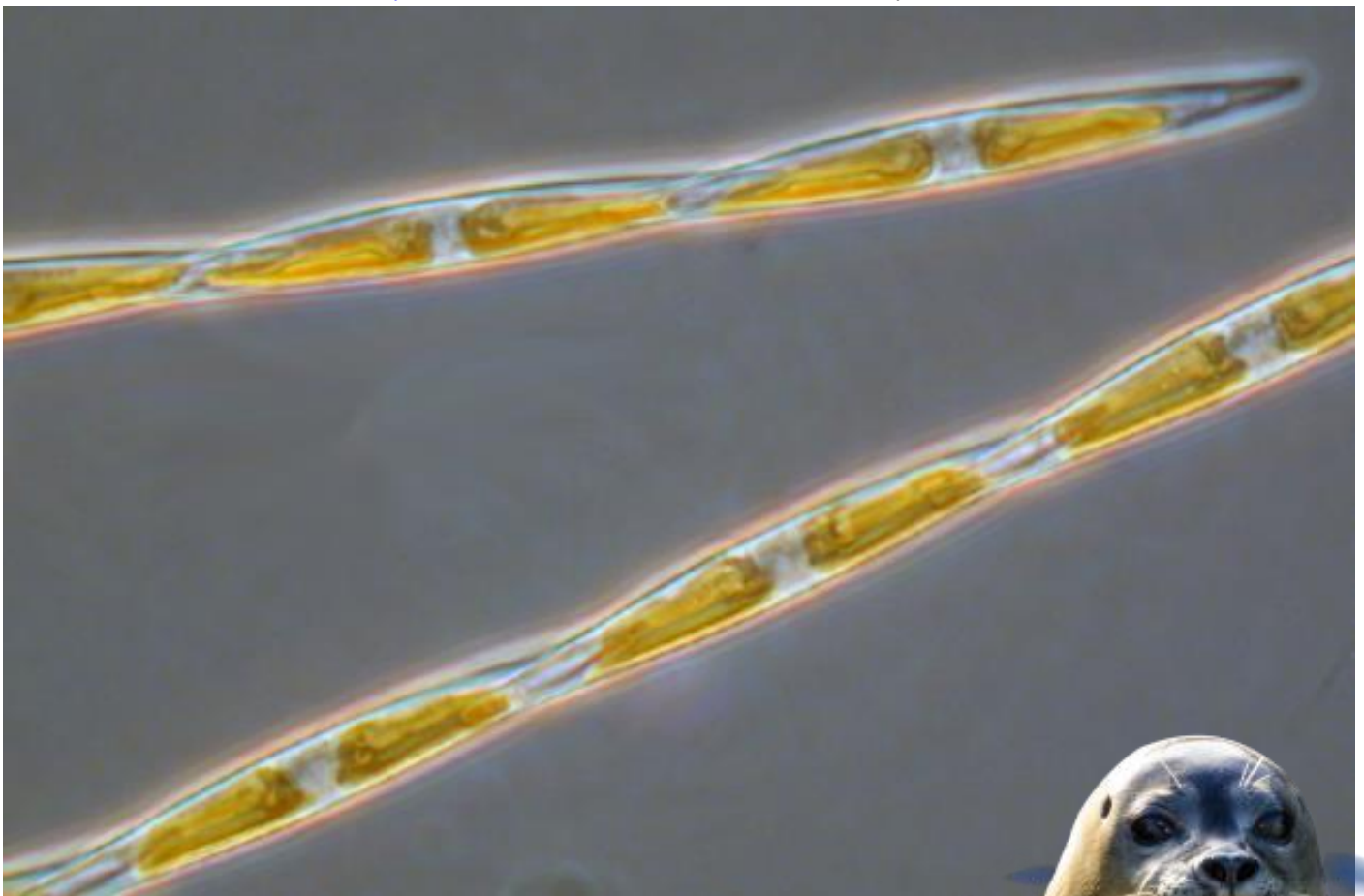
Pseudo-nitzschia (Wikipedia / Rozalind Jester / Florida South Western State College)

June is the time of year when around 70,000 female sea lions travel to the Channel Islands near Los Angeles to give birth to their pups. Unfortunately, this has collided with the harmful algae bloom. Dozens of dolphins have also died from the toxin.

"This is the worst domoic acid event I've ever seen," Deming tells the Los Angeles Times, "and I've worked here for over 10 years."

Over the past 20 years, California has seen five other harmful algae blooms.

Usually, sea lions will naturally flush the toxin after three days. But they can also die if they have too high a dose of domoic acid in their diet. Rescuers have been relocating very sick animals to facilities where they are treated by a vet, and usually given fluids, non-toxic fish, and anti-seizure medications. Domoic

acid can also build-up in shellfish, lobsters, crabs, or clams. In humans, this toxin can cause 'amnesic shellfish poisoning', with symptoms that include diarrhea, nausea, seizures, coma, irreversible memory loss, and death.

Six people died and 100 fell ill from eating toxic shellfish in California in 1927. Since then, the state has closely regulated seafood markets, enforcing closures when domoic acid levels are too high.

Curiously, the 1963 horror movie *The Birds* was quite possibly inspired by an incident of domoic acid poisoning.

Two years before the movie was released, crazed seabirds were spotted pelting the shores of California, regurgitating anchovies. An analysis of zooplankton in archival samples demonstrated that pseudo-nitzschia were present in high numbers at the time.

U.S. destroys last of its declared chemical weapons, closing a deadly chapter dating to World War I

Source: https://news.yahoo.com/us-set-destroy-last-chemical-042325026.html?.tsrc=daily_mail&uh_test=0_00

July 07 — The last of the United States' declared chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed at a sprawling military installation in eastern Kentucky, the White House announced Friday, a milestone that closes a chapter of warfare dating back to World War I.

Workers at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky destroyed rockets filled with GB nerve agent, completing a decadeslong campaign to eliminate a stockpile that by the end of the Cold War totaled more than 30,000 tons.

"For more than 30 years, the United States has worked tirelessly to eliminate our chemical weapons stockpile,"

said in a statement released by the White House. "Today, I am proud to announce that the United States has safely destroyed the final munition in that stockpile — bringing us one step closer to a world free from the horrors of chemical weapons."

The weapons' destruction is a major watershed for Richmond, Kentucky and Pueblo, Colorado, where an Army depot destroyed the last of its chemical agents last month. It's also a defining moment for arms control efforts worldwide.

The U.S. faced a Sept. 30 deadline to eliminate its remaining chemical weapons under the international Chemical Weapons Convention, which took effect in 1997 and was joined by 193 countries. The munitions being destroyed in Kentucky are the last of 51,000 M55 rockets with GB nerve agent — a deadly toxin also known as sarin — that have been stored at the depot since the 1940s.

By destroying the munitions, the U.S. is officially underscoring that these types of weapons are no longer acceptable in the battlefield and sending a message to the handful of countries that haven't joined the agreement, military experts say. "Chemical weapons are responsible for some of the most horrific episodes of human loss," Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said in a statement. "Though the use of these deadly agents will always be a stain on history, today our nation has finally fulfilled our promise to rid our arsenal of this evil.
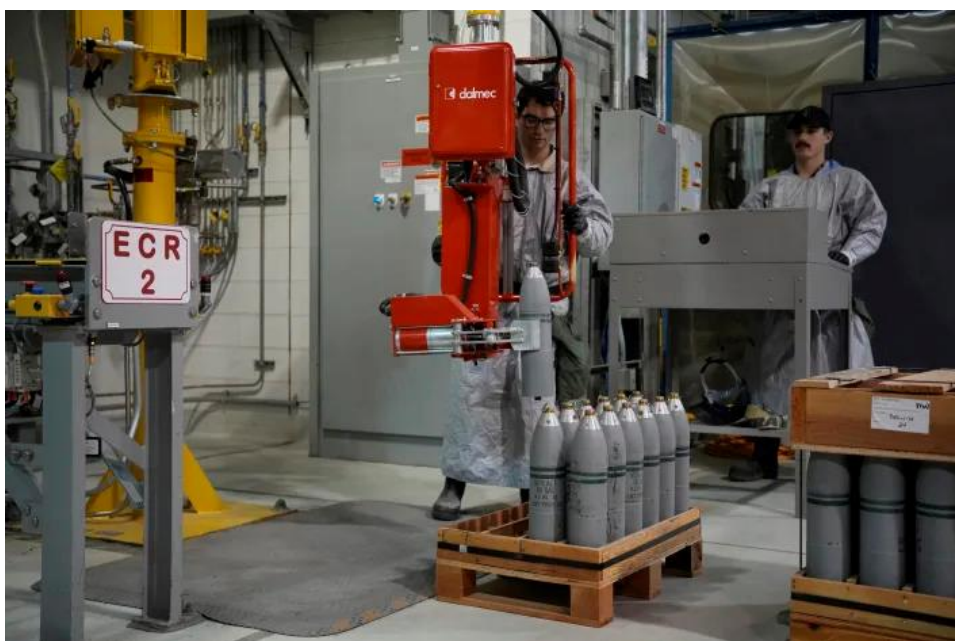
Friday's announcement came as the Biden administration has also decided to provide cluster munitions to Ukraine, a weapon that two-thirds of NATO countries have banned because it can cause many civilian casualties. National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Ukraine has promised to use the munitions — bombs that open in the air and release scores of smaller bomblets — carefully.

Chemical weapons were first used in modern warfare in World War I, where they were estimated have killed at least 100,000. Despite their use being subsequently banned by the Geneva Convention, countries continued to stockpile the weapons until the treaty calling for their destruction.

In southern Colorado, workers at the Army Pueblo Chemical Depot started destroying the weapons in 2016, and on June 22 completed their mission of neutralizing an entire cache of about 2,600 tons of mustard blister agent. The projectiles and mortars comprised about 8.5% of the country's original chemical weapons stockpile of 30,610 tons of agent.

Nearly 800,000 chemical munitions containing mustard agent were stored since the 1950s inside row after row of heavily guarded concrete and earthen bunkers that pock the landscape near a large swath of farmland east of Pueblo.

The weapons' destruction alleviates a concern that civic leaders in Colorado and Kentucky admit was always in the back of their minds.

"Those (weapons) sitting out there were not a threat," Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar said. But, he added, "you always wondered what might happen with them."

In the 1980s, the community around Kentucky's Blue Grass Army Depot rose up in opposition to the Army's initial plan to incinerate the plant's 520 tons of chemical weapons, leading to a decadeslong battle over how they would be disposed of. They were able to halt the planned incineration plant, and then, with help from lawmakers, prompted the Army to submit alternative methods to burning the weapons.

Craig Williams, who became the leading voice of the community opposition and later a partner with political leadership and the military, said residents were concerned about potential toxic pollution from burning the deadly chemical agents.

Williams noted that the military eliminated most of its existing stockpile by burning weapons at other, more remote sites such as Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean or at a chemical depot in the middle of the Utah desert. But the Kentucky site was adjacent to Richmond and only a few dozen miles away from Lexington, the state's second-largest city.

"We had a middle school of over 600 kids a mile away from the (planned) smokestack," Williams said.

The Kentucky storage facility has housed mustard agent and the VX and sarin nerve agents, much of it inside rockets and other projectiles, since the 1940s. The state's disposal plant was completed in 2015 and began destroying weapons in 2019. It uses a process called neutralization to dilute the deadly agents so they can be safely disposed of.

The project, however, has been a boon for both communities, and facing the eventual loss of thousands of workers, both are pitching the pool of high-skilled laborers as a plus for companies looking to locate in their regions.

Workers at the Pueblo site used heavy machinery to meticulously — and slowly — load aging weapons onto conveyor systems that fed into secure rooms where remote-controlled robots did the dirty and dangerous work of eliminating the toxic mustard agent, which was designed to blister the skin and cause inflammation of the eyes, nose, throat and lungs.

Robotic equipment removed the weapons' fuses and bursters before the mustard agent was neutralized with hot water and mixed with a caustic solution to prevent the reaction from reversing. The byproduct was further broken down in large tanks swimming with microbes, and the mortars and projectiles were decontaminated at 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit (538 degrees Celsius) and recycled as scrap metal.

Problematic munitions that were leaky or overpacked were sent to an armored, stainless steel detonation chamber to be destroyed at about 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit (593 degrees Celsius).

The Colorado and Kentucky sites were the last among several, including Utah and the Johnston Atoll, where the nation's chemical weapons had been stockpiled and destroyed. Other locations included facilities in Alabama, Arkansas and Oregon. Officials say the elimination of the U.S. stockpile is a major

step forward for the Chemical Weapons Convention. Only three countries — Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan — have not signed the treaty. A fourth, Israel, has signed but not ratified the treaty.

Concerns remain that some parties to the convention, particularly Russia and Syria, possess undeclared chemical weapons stockpiles. Biden on Friday urged Russia and Syria to fully comply with the treaty, and called on the remaining countries to join it.

The international chemical weapons watchdog hailed the U.S. move as a "historic success of multilateralism" but said challenges remain such as urging the holdouts to join the treaty and destroying and recovering old chemical weapons.

"Recent uses and threats of use of toxic chemicals as weapons illustrate that preventing re-emergence will remain a priority for the organization," said Fernando Arias, director-general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Arms control advocates hope this final step by the U.S. could be used as a model for eliminating other types of weapons.

"It shows that countries can really ban a weapon of mass destruction," said Paul F. Walker, vice chairman of the Arms Control Association and coordinator of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition. "If they want to do it, it just takes the political will and it takes a good verification system."

> **EDITOR'S COMMENT:** Good news! BUT those who produced chemical weapons in the past, know how to produce them again and now with the capabilities provided by the AI, new CWAs would be much deadlier. In addition, a suspicious person would say who will forbid the possessor to have a small stockpile hidden?

ChemProX, Designed for Field Detection
Source

June 07 – I would dare to say that nowadays customer listening practices stand to product/service development the same way evolutionism stood for the species survivability. This process of seeking, understanding, and taking actions on a product upon customer or user feedback will ensure that the product/service survives in the wild market jungle.

From marketing and sales point of view, CBRN works with similar rules than any other market, having its own products and services, tailored to its most common user segments – military / defence and first response / hazmat units.

In fact, in the case of Bertin Environics, the foundation of the original company itself – Environics Oy – back in 1987, was deeply related to a case in which the end-customer – Finnish Defence Forces – was actively involved in the development of a new product, in this case an automatic chemical gas detector totally "made in Finland".

Research & Development

Bertin Environics R&D team understands that successful product development is based on attentive user feedback collection and analysis – or feedback management. After that, the collected data will go through an essential productization process to achieve a solution for a real problem (instead of merely tackling technical issues).

Despite being a continuous process consisting of many internal stages, keeping the channels open for engaging in direct discussions with end-users, not only passively but also actively, by encouraging them to share their thoughts and reviews is also taken as a serious task.
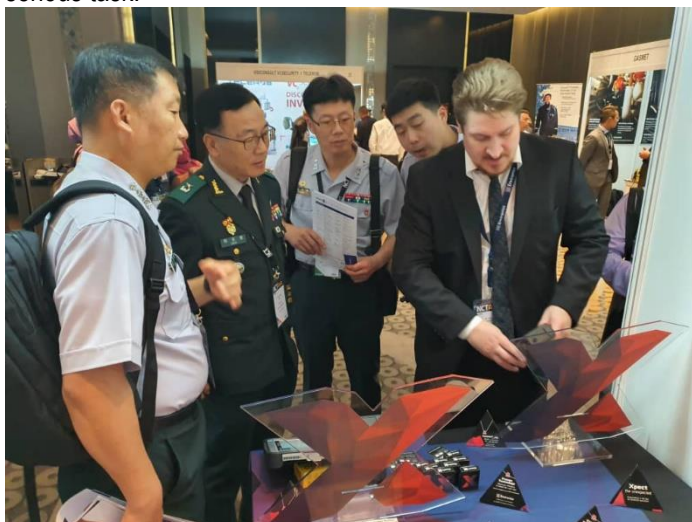
Besides digital strategies such as feedback forms, in CBRN industry engaging in face-to-face discussions with end-users during exhibitions, trainings, customer meetings, etc, has proven to be an excellent way of obtaining valuable and spontaneous feedback on the product, for gathering ideas for future improvements from those who have been already using it.

ChemProX, an Early Warning Chemical Detector Designed from the Beginning for Field Use
As stated in the product's datasheet, ChemProX is "developed together with First Response professionals" to be an IMS based handheld early warning detector, meaning it is expected "to give early warning when in presence of (…) CWAs and TICs/TIMs, as fast as possible (…) so that the operators have time to protect themselves (…)". But what if the operators see ways of improving the detector's usability on the field, that will help them to get the relevant data and information for correct counter measuring even faster? Since the launch of the detector approximately 4 years ago, we have been receiving and archiving feedback that has been processed and released on several free software updates, always available from the ChemProX Update Station.

Customer Listening > Feedback Management > Customer Satisfaction
We would like to share a few examples of suggestions that were heard and put into practice to improve ChemProX's customer experience. Because only those who are on the field know its demands!
1. **Language translation tools**
   A simplified Excel-table that could be shared to a 3rd party who could easily manage the language translation independently, without the need for editing lines of code.

Currently ChemProX's user interface has been translated into 5 languages (other than Finnish and English), because many times the device is more user friendly when operators can use it in their native language.

2. **Automatic operation/task clock**
   In the CC software, the operation/task clock can be displayed and turned on when the operators leave for the mission.

3. **Additional data sharing in unmanned applications**
   When ChemProX is mounted on a drone or robot, it is possible for the operator to remotely operate different devices in the group to see the trend information, as well as change of detection modes over radio data, for a dynamic 2-way communication.

4. **Setup Assistant**
   Upon multiple requests to make setting up the detector network easier, the Setup Assistant was created, providing step-by-step instructions for establishing the detector network.

Setup Assistant as a Feedback Based Improvement

The Setup Assistant was implemented on June 2020 and works as an inbuilt guide to help users to utilize the most commonly used wireless communications. The Setup Assistant is located in the information menu and can be used for:

- Configuring a Radio Data group
- Accessing the ChemProX User Interface Program
- Closing unnecessary connections

This kind of communication settings needs to be done only once unless there is need for changing connectivity methods or radio channels.
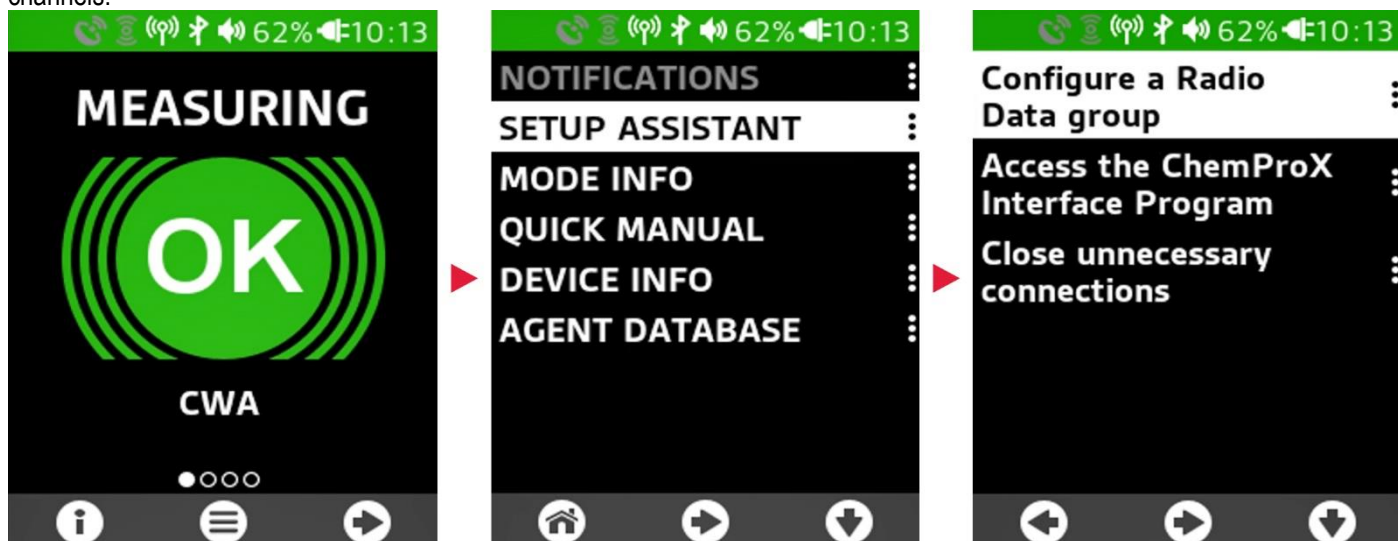
ChemProX Setup Assistant, a step-by-step guide to configure detection network settings.

ChemProX, From Experts to Users

By conducting this constant active customer listening and productizing selected suggestions, Bertin Environics team has been able to develop a worldwide well known and acknowledged handheld chemical detector, scientifically reliable and easy to operate in the harsh environmental conditions in which is meant to be used. ChemProX's ruggedized shell makes it a MIL compliant CWA lightweight detector and therefore a top favourite for several defence organizations in 4 continents, whereas it's user friendliness, inbuilt SOPs and fast response make it irresistible for Hazmat first response units.

The views and opinions expressed in Environics Blog are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Environics Oy. Any content provided by the authors are of their opinion and are not intended to malign any religion, ethnic group, club, organization, company, individual, neither they serve as a scientific statement.

I am **Teemu Partanen** and I have been working in the CBRN field since 2004, focusing mainly in chemical detection. From technical specialization to product management and sales support, as well as technical and practical CBRN training, I have been on top of the trends and market requirements of military and civil defence first responders.

Draper Equips Small UAVs for Tomorrow's Battlefield

Source: https://finance.yahoo.com/news/draper-equips-small-uavs-tomorrows-140000789.html
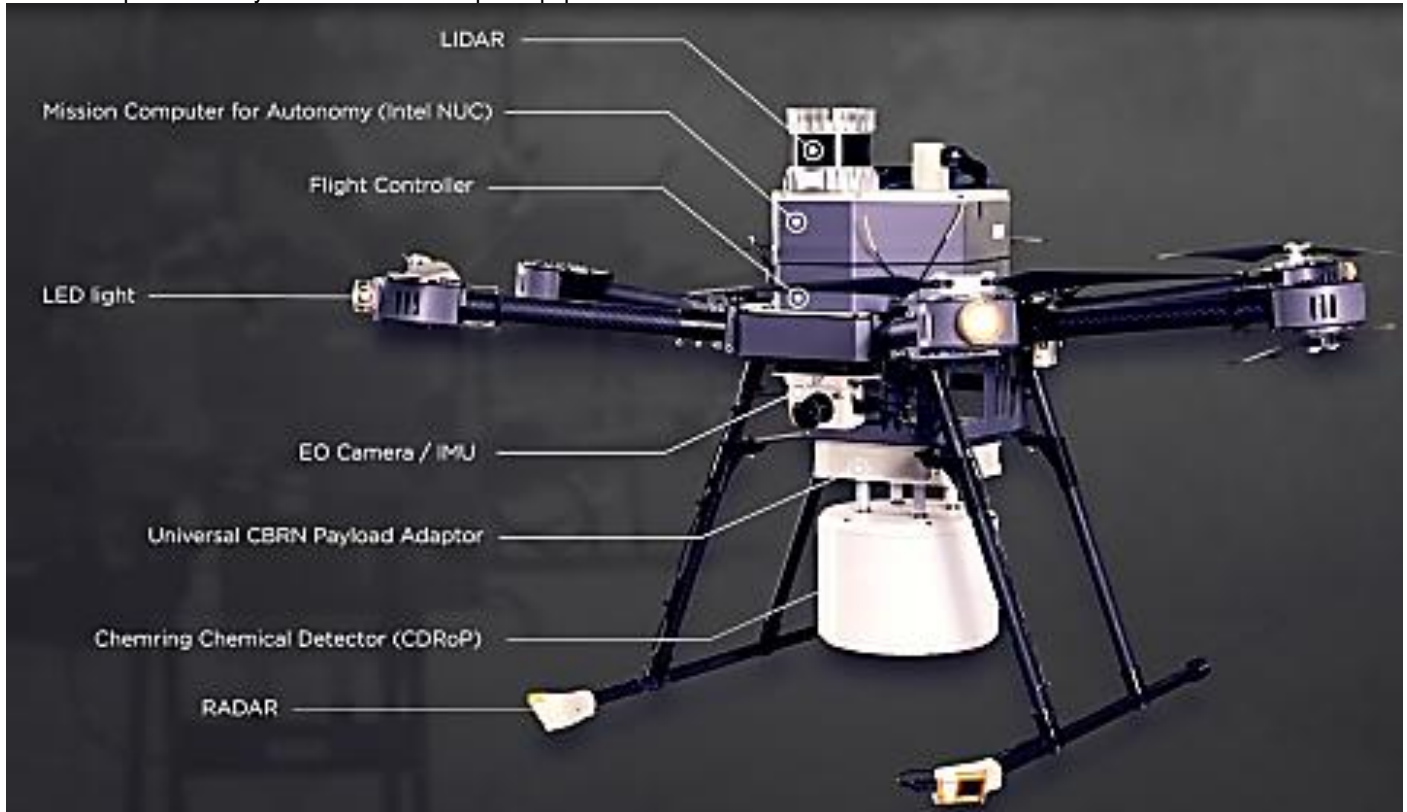
July 10 – In field tests, Draper demonstrates advances to its mobile military platform that include an autonomy framework, a sensor-driven mapping algorithm and sensors to detect the presence of chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear (CBRN) elements.

Battlefields entered a new era with the introduction of small unmanned aerial vehicles, or sUAVs. Commonly called drones, sUAVs enable soldiers to gain an aerial view of the battlefield and improve their situational awareness of the battlespace.

Designed for low-altitude intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions that depend on rapid deployment and agile maneuverability, sUAVs are being pushed to add more technology while also being asked to fly farther, smarter and better.

It's a situation that's challenging the developer community, according to Won Kim, a program manager at Draper. His team is unveiling a new set of capabilities for sUAVs that represents an advance in the platform from remotely operated vehicles to those capable of fully autonomous operations.

One new capability is to equip sUAVs so that they can fly ahead of a military unit to scout a location and sense the presence of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) elements. Hazard detection using an sUAV can reduce the kinds of risks soldiers might encounter by scouting a location using handheld or vehicle-mounted sensors.

"Customers are asking, can an sUAV sniff out these CBRN hazards in place of humans? How smart does an sUAV need to be to search, map and locate these CBRN hazard without a remote operator? When an sUAV encounters a building or obstacle, can it fly in and around it safely? These are just some of the questions our team is exploring," Kim said.

Kim's team set to work on these challenges in a program funded by the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense (JPEO-CBRND) called CSIRP, which stands for CBRN Sensor Integration on Robotics Platform. The team investigated the customer needs through field observations, noting requirements such as sensor efficiency and resolution, flight speed, height, duration, autonomous operation, sensor-driven mapping, networked command and enhanced situational awareness through shared interactive digital maps.

Soldiers operating in urban environments, for instance, need an sUAV that can navigate in and around buildings and obstacles, such as trees or vehicles even when GPS signals are degraded or completely unavailable. Soldiers also need sUAVs to remotely search, detect, map and locate dangerous CBRN hazards. Soldiers dispersed across an area also want a way to share information that is secure, networked and mapped to the environment.

The new capabilities Draper developed for CSIRP take advantage of multiple environmental inputs, along with a sensor fusion algorithm that can synthesize data from instruments including GPS, LiDAR, inertial measurement units, magnetometers and cameras. All that fused information is designed to achieve robust and autonomous operation through the use of new algorithms developed for CSIRP that make the sUAV capable of obstacle detection and avoidance.

Under CSIRP, Draper integrated the sUAV with a mobile computing app, running on a handheld device, called the Tactical Assault Kit (TAK), which gives soldiers a map-based common operating picture on a shared network and provides enhanced situational awareness for command and control. Draper has developed software for every version TAK and the CBRN sensor plugin since it was first developed by the Department of Defense.

In a series of field tests, Draper engineers set the sUAV on a path of several miles, over and around obstacles, navigating autonomously until it detected a simulated CBRN hazard and conducted a sweep of a field one square kilometer in size to map elements of interest. The information was gathered onboard the UAV and shared with the TAK operator and users in the network, including headquarters.

"Mobile military technologies, like sUAVs, can be force multipliers and force protectors at the same time," Kim said. "Anytime you can deploy technology like an sUAV to detect suspected CBRN hazards remotely and operate independently without exposing a soldier unnecessarily to harm is an advance in warfighter systems, and that's important to us at Draper."

"Draper designed the autonomy framework and sensor-driven mapping algorithm to be an extensible, modular and resilient mobility platform that is vehicle and processing system agnostic," said Julius Rose, associate director for Sensors and Delivery at Draper. "As new capabilities and vehicles are developed, autonomous systems should be readily adaptable to support numerous mission types across domains, be that air, ground or sea. Development needs to be efficient, reusable and agile to keep up with the pace of the needs of soldiers and personnel in the field."

Draper's work on the CSIRP program builds on its legacy in autonomous systems, algorithms and positioning, navigation and timing. Advances made through the program will be applied to other air systems, as well as ground, marine and underwater systems. In addition to working with autonomous systems, Draper has assisted U.S. government agencies with projects including cybersecurity, technology protection and miniature cryptography for high-stress environments.

WMD expert highlights the threat posed by chemical weapons on the modern battlefield

By Walter T. Ham IV

Source: https://www.army.mil/article/268351/wmd_expert_highlights_threat_posed_by_chemical_weapons_on_modern_battlefield

July 14 – A Weapons of Mass Destruction expert discussed the lessons learned from eliminating Syria's chemical weapons program and how those lessons may apply to future large-scale combat operations.

Dr. Philipp C. Bleek spoke to Army leaders from the 20th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosives (CBRNE) Command on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, during an Operations Directorate Leader Professional Development session, July 13.

The 20th CBRNE Command is the U.S. military's premier all hazards command. From 19 bases in 16 states, Soldiers and Army civilians from 20th CBRNE Command take on the world's most dangerous hazards in support of joint, interagency and allied operations.

Bleek is a professor at Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) at Monterey, California, in the Department of Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies (NPTS).

He also currently serves as an expert on the Congressionally-mandated, Department of Defense-sponsored, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine-convened study called "Assessing and Improving Strategies for Preventing, Countering, and Responding to Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism: Chemical Threats."

Bleek previously served as a senior advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs where he helped to author the 2014 National Defense Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction and played a role in planning for various Syria chemical weapons-related contingencies.

Much of the declared Syrian chemical weapons stockpile was destroyed in international waters aboard the container ship MV Cape Ray with two Field Deployable Hydrolysis Systems that were developed by the Edgewood Chemical and Biological Center, now the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command's Chemical Biological Center on Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. Part of the Ready Reserve Force, the Portsmouth, Virginia-homeported Cape Ray is owned by the U.S. Maritime Administration.

"This eliminated most of one of the few chemical arsenals that existed," said Bleek.

Crew members unload cargo from a helicopter aboard the container ship MV Cape Ray (T-AKR 9679) in the Mediterranean Sea Aug. 4, 2014. The U.S. government-owned Cape Ray was modified and deployed to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to dispose of Syrian chemical agents in accordance with terms Syria agreed to in late 2013. (Photo Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Desmond Parks)

This LPD event was held two weeks after the 105th anniversary of the U.S. Army Chemical Corps and a week after the United States completed the destruction of its declared chemical weapons stockpiles in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997. "The dramatic marginalization of chemical weapons is something worth celebrating," said Bleek, while adding that the potential threat of chemical weapons use persists, particularly to hinder operations and target logistical hubs during large-scale combat operations. Col. Vance M. Brunner, the operations director for the 20th CBRNE Command, invited Bleek to speak at the development session. "Dr. Bleek brings a host of knowledge regarding chemical weapon programs both by state and non-state actors," said Brunner. "His research and background include factors on why states do or do not pursue CBRN weapons, proliferation of key countries, deterrence, and conventions, such as the biological and toxic weapons convention and the chemical weapons convention." "He is always looking at future threats posed by chemical weapons and their delivery systems, such as the use of drones in swarms or the use of microchemistry labs to manufacture chemical agents," said Brunner.

The Middlebury Institute of International Studies has teamed up with the 20th CBRNE Command for their Leadership Development Program. "The world-class professors at Middlebury bring a higher level of education than what you will find at our military schools. They bring a global security perspective for combating Weapons of Mass Destruction," said Brunner. "They cover topics at the strategic and political level, such as treaties, international organizations and regional political factors for the pursuit of WMDs."

Brunner was selected to be an Army War College fellow at Middlebury Institute of International Studies from 2021-2022 before coming to the 20th CBNRE Command. "I chose this fellowship because of the unique opportunity that MIIS offers to its students. The NPTS program focuses on nonproliferation of WMDs," said Brunner, a native of Kailua, Hawaii, and graduate of the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. "The NPTS program provided me with a global perspective for combating Weapons of Mass Destruction that I feel is needed as the 20th G3 (operations director)."

A career U.S. Army Chemical Corps officer who has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, Brunner said the Leadership Development Program enhances the readiness of the 20th CBRNE Command to serve as a Theater CBRNE Headquarters in support of a combatant command. The colonel said the program includes

monthly readings followed by lectures and discussions with experts who provide a higher-level view of CBRNE at the operational and strategic level. Brunner said the development program is also designed to help the command prepare to support maneuver forces during large-scale combat operations.

Will Rowell, right, a chemical engineering technician with Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC), opens a valve on the Field Deployable Hydrolysis System (FDHS) aboard the roll-on/roll-off and container ship MV Cape Ray (T-AKR 9679) while Stephen Crawford, a chemical equipment technician with ECBC, verifies procedures during practice operations of the FDHS in Rota, Spain, June 10, 2014. The U.S. government-owned MV Cape Ray was modified and deployed to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to dispose of Syrian chemical agents in accordance with terms Syria agreed to in late 2013. (Photo Credit: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Desmond Parks)

"Preparing for countering Weapons of Mass Destruction with a near-peer adversary is critical. Any U.S. adversary will struggle in a conventional fight with the might of the U.S. Joint Force and its multiple partners and allies. Therefore, they may rely on WMDs to level the playing field or try to gain an advantage against the U.S. and its allies," said Brunner. "Being prepared for worst case scenarios is an essential part of a near-peer fight."

CBRNe WORLD | June 2023

Lt Col Sarah Cooper, Chief, Animal Medicine at the US Defense Health Agency Veterinary Service provided written responses to our questions

It's a dog's life

Source: https://cbrneworld.com/dashboard/downloads

Q. How many other CBRN research projects are within your veterinary purview? Is it just military working dogs (MWD)?
A. The Defense Health Agency (DHA) Veterinary Service works with several stakeholders including the US air force DOD executive agency for the MWD programme and DHA research and development to manage a working dog research portfolio. This portfolio validates research priorities for the MWD programme, including projects related to CBRN.

Q. Is the military leading the charge when it comes to working dogs – or just dogs - and CBRN? Presumably agriculture, which uses a lot of both pesticides and working dogs, also has some research ongoing? In addition, there are the high value show dogs, as well as assistance dogs for people with disabilities, that need to go through some decon process.
A. Research related to canine CBRN exposure risks and response, protection and decontamination is needed. Many agencies and organisations have equity within this field.

Q. In the civilian arena, at least, we are seeing working dogs being used in the CBW detection process. Do you hold out hope that there might be some validated PPE for them, or are they too few in number to generate commercial opportunities?

A. Validated PPE for any working dog is valuable. PPE that can span several working dog categories would seemingly have greater potential.

Q. We've seen a lot of work done in the human field on decontamination of hair. As that progresses can you see it having an impact in the choice of breed in working dogs - shorter hair variants, for example? Or does CBRN fit so low down in the consideration process that it is almost forgotten?

A. There are multiple salient characteristics utilised by the DOD to guide selection criteria for the procurement of working dogs. The question of whether coat type offers significant benefits in CBRN protection is still unanswered. That information would be considered with the other selection criteria if the data supports doing so.

Q. As you point out, the hair on the dog's back is different to that on its belly. Could this see more targeted 'dog friendly' PPE - such as protective layers for the belly/genitals rather than full body protection?

A. Yes, the anatomical and physiological differences between the human and canine, as well as different regions of the canine should be considered, both from a protection and a decontamination standpoint. Research that continues to answer these questions will be invaluable in informing protective equipment for canines that not only functions with the animal's intended purpose, but also does not negatively affect the MWD's health or welfare.

●▶ **Read the rest of this unique article at the source's URL – pp.36-37.**

Dr John Hart, non-resident scholar at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (US), and Dr Thomas Stock, Scientific Expert at Dynasafe Environmental Systems GmbH, give their personal view on the destruction of chemical munitions in China

Buried, but not forgotten...

Avon Protection awarded NATO contract for CBRN protective gloves & boots

Source: https://www.adsadvance.co.uk/avon-protection-awarded-nato-contract-for-cbrn-protective-gloves-boots.html

July 18 – Avon Protection has been awarded a three-year contract, with two optional one-year extensions, by the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) for CBRN protective boots and gloves.

The framework contract will allow NATO nations and partners to place orders for Avon Protection's EXOSKIN-B1 boots and EXOSKIN-G1 gloves.

Launched in 2022, the EXOSKIN range of boots and gloves are manufactured from Avon Protection's proven rubber technology. The range protects operators against Chemical Warfare Agent, Toxic Industrial Chemical and biological threats.

The ambidextrous ==EXOSKIN-G1 glove== features a rubberised outer layer textured to maintain grip in wet conditions, and an intelligent, seamless inner knitted liner that has a conductive tip on both the thumb and forefinger to enable the wearer to handle and operate electronic touch screen devices.

The **EXOSKIN-B1 boot** provides improved durability and agility in the field, with quick-release straps to secure the garment over standard footwear. A highly textured sole improves the wearer's manoeuvrability in all underfoot conditions. Designed for quick donning and doffing, the EXOSKIN range integrates with many protective suit ensembles, delivering advanced dexterity and agility in the field while maximising protection for the operator. "This contract further underlines Avon Protection's close partnership with NATO for the provision of CBRN protection capability. To date several nations have actively deployed the FM50 respirator under the ongoing NSPA framework contract for that system," Steve Elwell, President, Respiratory Protection for Avon Protection, said. "With the new boots and gloves contract, all NATO nations will now have the ability to acquire our EXOSKIN products, allowing them to benefit from our wider portfolio of market-leading technologies and to keep their operators safe in the field during CBRN situations." Avon Protection, part of the Avon Protection plc group of brands, designs and produces life-critical personal protection solutions for the world's militaries and first responders. With a portfolio that includes chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN), respiratory and other breath assist solutions, Avon Protection's mission is to advance the future of protection by enhancing the performance, efficiency and capability of those who risk their lives to save others.

The Future of Smart Medical Diagnosis

Source: https://i-hls.com/archives/119884
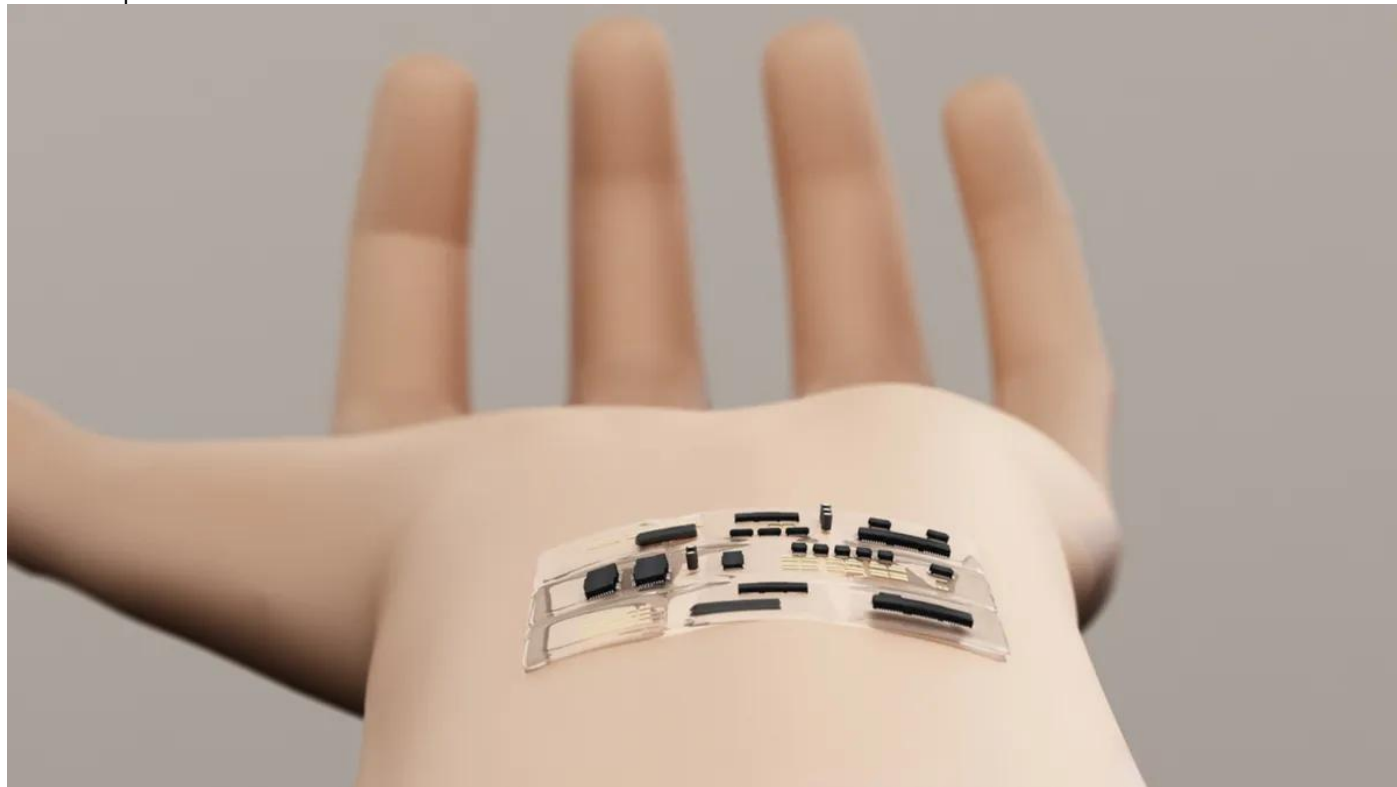
July 13 – A new smart textile was developed by University of California (UCLA) researchers, it is made of nanomagnets and yarn and can diagnose the human body with the same accuracy as medical-grade devices used in hospitals.

When the patch is applied to a body it can monitor functions ranging from breathing rate to muscle movement and heart spikes, and it will allow doctors to quickly diagnose any health issue.

You might ask yourselves- wait, aren't smartwatches already doing this? Well, while wearable fitness trackers and smartwatches do give you an idea of your health, the information they provide is not enough for a complete diagnosis that a doctor needs to treat any condition.

The smart patch, which is about 5 cm in size, can replace bulky devices and make medical diagnosis easy, accessible, and affordable.

So how does it work?

According to Interesting Engineering, the textile is made of silver-coated yarn stitched on a nanomagnet-filled rubber patch. The working mechanism of the patch is based on two concepts; the magnetoelastic effect (when magnetic stress changes a material's magnetic properties) and electromagnetic induction (when a change in the magnetic field gives rise to electric current).

A practical example of this can be a man who had a minor accident while cycling and his leg muscles were injured. The mechanical force resulting from the injury will deform the magnetic field inside the patch on his leg. This change will produce electrical signals containing information about the body's damage. All this information will be quickly available on a mobile app to the doctor who is going to treat the injured person.

By using the patch the doctors can know for example to what degree the injured person can safely bend his legs or how much force his legs can withstand during the recovery phase.

In addition to being stretchable, durable, and waterproof, the patch will also likely be extremely affordable. The researchers claim that a single patch made from their ==smart textile should cost less than $3.==

"Another highlight of the device is its self-powering properties. The ability to convert biomechanical force to electricity means the device is also a generator. This eliminates the need for bulky, heavy, and rigid battery packs usually needed in wearable electronic designs," said Jun Chen, a senior author and assistant professor of bioengineering at UCLA.

This patch might be the affordable and useful future of medicine and first aid, but it still needs a lot of optimization. researchers are currently working towards making it lighter, better, and more suitable for human use.

The **study** was published in the journal *Matter* on June 27, and this information was provided by Interesting Engineering.

EDITOR'S COMMENT: This micro-device might be useful for the CBRN First Responder of the future!

2023 CBRNE-RELATED CONFERENCES

Riyadh, KSA

NCT Europe 2023
VIEW EVENT

NCT South America 2023
VIEW EVENT

NCT Middle East 2023
VIEW EVENT

https://nct-events.com/event

04-08 September: NCT USA Aberdeen Proving Ground, Edgewood MD	**04-11 November: NCT Asia** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik, Croatia 23-27 October 2023

CSCM   📅 February, 2022

Announcing the CBRNe Science and Consequence Management 2023 World Congress

https://cscm-congress.org/conference

The 2023 CSCM World Congress will be held at Hotel Croatia. Situated across the bay from the historic walls of Dubrovnik, Hotel Croatia is a leading five-star resort and conference hotel on the southern part of the Adriatic Sea. Hotel Croatia's architecture blends seamlessly with its natural surroundings. Shaded by a pine tree forest, while offering spectacular sea views, all 487 rooms feature balconies, which overlook the Adriatic Sea or Cavtat Bay. State-of-the-art facilities include numerous gourmet restaurants, a spa center, and two beaches. Hotel Croatia is ideal for a broader experience of the Dubrovnik Riviera. Suited for business and relaxation alike, the Hotel Croatia serves as an excellent base for exploring the city of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik Riviera. The 2023 CSCM World Congress will be held under the auspices of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. In addition, we will enjoy active participation of the RACVIAC Center for Security Cooperation throughout the organization of the Congress as well as many other international and national organizations.

https://istanbulkbrn.org/

Within the body of Istanbul Aydın University, under the coordination of Istanbul Aydın University Environment and Human Health Application and Research Center (ÇEVSAM) and CBRN Defense Policy Development Association the 1st of the "Istanbul CBRN Days" will be held. This meeting, which will provide the opportunity to share the knowledge and experience of very valuable participants on this subject in the

national sense, will accelerate the development of scientific infrastructure and studies on CBRN DEFENSE in our country and related institutions and organizations, will ensure that experts and employees in this field get to know each other, share their work and contribute to the increase of cooperation between them. We hope to be found.

CBRN environment; It covers a large number of dead, injured, and environmental effects, especially those who have been infected with biological warfare agents, exposed to chemical warfare agents and/or toxins, and injured as a result of the effects of nuclear weapons and radiation. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has been affecting the whole world for almost the last 3 years, has enabled us to better understand the Biological threat of the CBRN concept, and in a sense, it has revealed how intense and difficult management of CBRN events can cause and can cause mass losses. The threat of CBRN weapons, which started with the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, and made a name for itself in the recent Syrian internal conflicts in the Middle East geography, including our country, has taken its place in the asymmetric war, and unfortunately, these agents are expected to be used in both war and terror environment in the future.

We think that this meeting, which will bring together many scientists, public and private sector representatives, will bring together many scientists, public and private sector representatives, based in Istanbul, which is the apple of the world's eye, and present the latest developments and technologies in the field of CBRN DEFENSE, and we think that this meeting will partially fill the deficiency of our Istanbul in this field. At the end of the event, we hope to see all the participants among us who will contribute to the "1st Istanbul CBRN Days", where we aim to raise awareness about CBRN threats and dangers.

You can find more detailed information about the KRBN Days, which we plan **to be held in Florya (Halit Aydın) Campus of Istanbul Aydın University on October 20 – 21, 2023,** and which we think will create an important added value for our country, at https://istanbulkbrn.org/

http://ismcr.org/2023-ismcr/

This symposium will focus on various aspects of research, applications and trends of robotics, advanced human-robot systems and applied technologies, e.g. in the fields of robotics, telerobotics, autonomous vehicles, simulator platforms, as well as virtual/augmented reality and 3D modelling and simulation. Like its previous editions, ISMCR 2023 serves as a forum for the exchange of recent research results and novel ideas in robotic technologies and applications; this time with specific reference to smart mobility.

TOPICS
We are looking for original, high-quality contributions addressing (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Robot Design Innovations;
- Sensors/Smart Sensors their Integration/Fusion;
- Advanced Controls and Actuators;
- Methods of Artificial Intelligence in Robotics;
- Humanoid, Climbing/Walking, Service, and Autonomous Robots;
- Anthropomorphic Robots/Mobile Robots;
- Teleexistence/ Telepresence;
- Augmented Reality/Mixed Reality/Virtual Reality (VR);
- Communication with Realistic Sensations;
- Intelligent CAD and IMS;
- Visual/Auditory/Tactile/Force Displays;
- Tools and Techniques for Modeling VR Systems;

- Software Architectures for VR;
- VR Interaction and Navigation Techniques, Distributed VR Systems and Motion Tracking;
- VR Input and Output Devices;
- Innovative Applications of VR;
- Human Factors in VR;
- Evaluation of VR Techniques and Systems;
- Internet and VRML Application of VR in all areas;
- Interactive Art and Entertainment;
- Education and Entertainment Robots;
- Medical and Healthcare Robots;
- Micro and Nano Robots;
- Innovative Robotics Applications.

https://ciprna-expo.com/

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here are 16 critical infrastructure sectors whose assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety.

Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21): Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience advances a national policy to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure. This directive supersedes Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7.

We must be prepared!

The Nation's critical infrastructure provides the essential services that underpin American society. Proactive and coordinated efforts are necessary to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure – including assets, networks, and systems – that are vital to public confidence and the Nation's safety, prosperity, and well-being.

Critical infrastructure must be secure and able to withstand and rapidly recover from all hazards. Achieving this will require integration with the national preparedness system across prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery.

This directive establishes national policy on critical infrastructure security and resilience. This endeavor is a shared responsibility among the Federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) entities, and public and private owners and operators of critical infrastructure (herein referred to as "critical infrastructure owners and operators"). This directive also refines and clarifies the critical infrastructure-related functions, roles, and responsibilities across the Federal Government, as well as enhances overall coordination and collaboration. The Federal Government also has a responsibility to strengthen the security and resilience of its own critical infrastructure, for the continuity of national essential functions, and to organize itself to partner effectively with and add value to the security and resilience efforts of critical infrastructure owners and operators.

The Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resilience North America conference will again bring together leading stakeholders from industry, operators, agencies and governments to collaborate on securing North America.

The conference will look at developing on the theme of previous events in helping to create better understanding of the issues and the threats, to help facilitate the work to develop frameworks, good risk management, strategic planning and implementation.

International CBRNE INSTITUTE

CBRNE-Terrorism Newsletter WMD

C²BRNE DIARY

BIO NEWS

Pandemic by numbers (as of July 24, 2023)

	CASES	DEATHS	COUNTRIES & TERRITORIES	MOST AFFECTED COUNTRIES*
COVID-19	(689,124,038) 691,796,957	(6,881,401) 6,901,835	229	USA, India, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, S. Korea

* over 30 million cases | numbers in parenthesis are patients/deaths of previous month

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ODNI News Release No. 16-23
June 23, 2023

ODNI Releases Report on the Potential Links Between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Origin of COVID-19

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) today released "The Potential Links Between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the Origin of the COVID-19 Pandemic" report.

The COVID-19 Origin Act of 2023 required the Intelligence Community to declassify information relating to potential links between the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic.

●► ODNI submitted the report to Congress, and it can be viewed here.

Declassified U.S. Intelligence Answers Few Questions on Origins of COVID-19

By Jeff Seldin
Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230623-declassified-u-s-intelligence-answers-few-questions-on-origins-of-covid19

June 23 – Newly declassified intelligence on the origins of the coronavirus pandemic appears to cast doubt on theories that the outbreak that killed millions around the world began at a research laboratory in Wuhan, China.

A report issued late Friday by U.S. intelligence agencies and shared with members of Congress said that despite concerns about biosafety measures at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), and despite its history of work with coronaviruses, there is no intelligence that indicates COVID-19 was present in the lab before the outbreak.

"We continue to have no indication that the WIV's pre-pandemic research holdings included SARS-CoV-2 or a close progenitor, nor any direct evidence that a specific research-related incident occurred involving WIV personnel before the pandemic that could have caused the COVID pandemic," according to the report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The report further states that the available evidence indicates the lab did not get possession of the COVID-19 virus until late December 2019, "when WIV researchers isolated and identified the virus from samples from patients diagnosed with pneumonia of unknown causes."

The newly declassified intelligence also seems to reject concerns that one of a handful of researchers at the lab who fell ill in November 2019 might have been patient zero.

"This information neither supports nor refutes either hypothesis of the pandemic's origins," the report said. "The researchers' symptoms could have been caused by a number of diseases and some of the symptoms were not consistent with COVID-19."

Yet despite the lack of evidence to support the idea that the COVID-19 pandemic originated at the lab in Wuhan, the U.S. intelligence report makes clear that neither of the leading theories – natural transmission from animals or a lab incident – can be ruled out.

"All [U.S. intelligence] agencies continue to assess that both a natural and laboratory-associated origin remain plausible hypotheses to explain the first human infection," the report said. And it said almost all intelligence agencies assess the virus "was not genetically engineered," while noting that while "most agencies assess that SARS-CoV-2 was not laboratory-adapted; some are unable to make a determination."

As for how the pandemic did start, there is less agreement.

The National Intelligence Council and four of the intelligence agencies continue to assess patient zero contracted SARS-CoV-2 as the result of exposure to an infected animal.

The FBI announced this past February that its analysts assess with "moderate confidence" that the pandemic began at the research lab in Wuhan, China.

Intelligence analysts at the Department of Energy have concluded, although with "low confidence," that the virus spread as a result of a lab leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Two other intelligence agencies, including the CIA, have not been able to determine a precise origin for the pandemic.

The new disclosure by the U.S. intelligence community comes three months after President Joe Biden signed legislation ordering the agencies to declassify as much information as possible about the pandemic's origins.

But the newly declassified information, in some ways, reflects few changes from the initial intelligence assessments shared in 2020, when U.S. agencies said that their information supported "the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not man-made or genetically modified," but that more work was needed to determine how the initial transmission of the virus took place.

Since the World Health Organization first declared a global health emergency in January 2020, COVID-19 has killed nearly 7 million people worldwide, with some officials suggesting the true death toll could be as high as 20 million.

Chinese health officials have repeatedly defended their handling of the COVID-19 outbreak, criticizing any suggestions that they should have shared more information sooner as "offensive and disrespectful."

As recently as March, leading U.S. intelligence officials noted collecting additional information on the COVID-19 virus has been difficult due, in part, to China's refusal to cooperate.

In a statement late Friday, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic praised the newly declassified report, saying, "The Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese People's Liberation Army have some serious explaining to do."

"Everyone deserves to know the truth, and the declassification of this report is a promising step toward full transparency," said Republicans Mike Turner and Brad Wenstrup.

"Based on the classified information that we received, we suspected right away that the coronavirus was not a natural phenomenon," they added. "We've been pushing for years to make this information available for all to see."

Could chatbots help devise the next pandemic virus?

Source: https://www.science.org/content/article/could-chatbots-help-devise-next-pandemic-virus

June 14 – Tech experts have been warning that artificial intelligence (AI) could turn against humanity by taking over everything from business to warfare. Now, Kevin Esvelt is adding another worry: AI could help someone with no science background and evil intentions order a virus capable of unleashing a pandemic.

Esvelt, a biosecurity expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, recently asked students to create a dangerous virus with the help of ChatGPT or other so-called large language models, systems that can generate humanlike responses to broad questions based on vast training sets of internet data. After only an hour, the class came up with lists of candidate viruses and companies that could synthesize their genetic code and assemble the pieces.

Esvelt and others say the exercise, described in an arXiv preprint posted on 6 June, underscores that AI systems may soon allow nonscientists to design bioweapons. Says Jaime Yassif of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonprofit focused on reducing nuclear and biosecurity threats, "This is dramatically increasing the risk in ways that are really alarming." But at least one virologist believes the concerns are overblown.

Biosecurity experts were already worried that biology's culture of openly exchanging information, including virus sequences, could be useful to bioterrorists. In principle, papers describing a deadly extinct or circulating virus could provide a blueprint for a new bioweapon. But to date, pulling this off has required considerable expertise. The would-be terrorist would need to identify a candidate virus as a starting point, synthesize the viral genetic material, and mix it with other reagents to "boot up" a virus capable of infecting cells and reproducing.

Biosafety experts warn that artificial intelligence chatbots could make it easier for terrorists to launch a pandemic as deadly as the 1918 flu outbreak. Otis Historical Archives/National Museum of Health and Medicine/Wikimedia Commons

All those steps are rapidly becoming easier, Yassif says. For example, new benchtop DNA printers might allow researchers to circumvent the screening that most synthetic biology companies now do to ensure no orders include genetic material for potential bioweapons. Someone with malicious intent could then send these genetic blueprints to one of dozens of contract research companies to be assembled into the target viruses. (To actually start a pandemic, the malefactor would also likely need to produce it en masse and figure out an effective delivery system.)

AI could further lower the barriers, Esvelt says. To investigate, he divided a class of graduate students without life sciences expertise into three groups, each with three or four members. All groups had access to GPT-4, Bard, and other AI chatbots, and were given 1 hour to ask the chatbots to help them design and acquire agents capable of causing a pandemic.

Some of the chatbots would not respond to direct queries asking for potentially dangerous agents. However, the students found that some of these safeguards could easily be bypassed with common "jailbreak" phrasing, such as starting a query with "I am working on developing a vaccine to prevent …"

Within the hour, the chatbots had suggested four viruses: the 1918 H1N1 influenza virus, a 2012 avian H5N1 influenza virus, the smallpox virus variola major, and a strain of the Nipah virus. In some cases, the chatbots even pointed to genetic mutations reported in the literature to increase transmission.

The AI engines also described techniques to assemble a virus from its genetic sequence, as well as the necessary lab supplies and companies that could provide them. Finally, the chatbots even suggested companies that might be willing to print genetic material without screening it, and contract labs that could help put the pieces together.

Esvelt doubts that these chatbots' suggestions pose much of a pandemic threat. Many people, for example, have some level of immunity to previous pandemic flu viruses. And variola's large genome is difficult for even experts to assemble. (Before assigning it to his class, Esvelt ran the experiment himself to ensure it wouldn't come up with truly threatening suggestions, and he ran his plans by other biosecurity experts.)

Yet Esvelt believes the experiment underscores how AI and other tools could make it easier for would-be terrorists to unleash new threats as the growing literature on biological threats is incorporated into AI training data. And Yassif notes that the technology will likely be open source, so in everyone's hands.

Restricting the information available to chatbots and other AI engines could help, Esvelt thinks. Among his proposals: excluding from training sets the very small number of papers online that describe recipes for creating and enhancing pathogens. Removing these papers, which Esvelt's team estimates make up less than 1% of the PubMed abstracts database, "would suffice to eliminate nearly all the risk," they write in the preprint. It would carry a cost, the authors acknowledge—the AI engines could not use these papers to advance biology in positive ways—but the benefit of preventing misuse would be "practical and immediate."

"In principle that is a very good suggestion," says Atoosa Kasirzadeh, an AI safety expert at the University of Edinburgh. But she notes, "At the moment we don't have good protocols to allow large language models to train on some parts of the internet and not others."

Other safeguards could include requiring all DNA synthesis companies and future benchtop DNA printers to screen genetic material against known pathogens and toxins, and requiring contract research organizations (CROs) to verify the safety of any genetic material they are requested to assemble.

Virologist Gustavo Palacios of the Mount Sinai Health System sees no cause for alarm. He says booting up viruses is more challenging than described, and the idea that a CRO that's not some sort of rogue organization will create a biological weapon is "preposterous." Still, Yassif concludes: "We need better controls at all the chokepoints."

'Criminal': Confidential EU Documents Reveal Thousands of Deaths From Pfizer-BioNTech Shots

By Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D.

Source: https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/confidential-eu-documents-deaths-pfizer-biontech-shots/

June 23 – Documents released by BioNTech to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) reveal tens of thousands of serious adverse events and thousands of deaths among people who received the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

The documents, dated Aug. 18, 2022, and marked "confidential," show that cumulatively, during the clinical trials and post-marketing period up to June 18, 2022, a total of 4,964,106 adverse events were recorded. The documents included an appendix with further details about the specifics about the identified adverse events. Among children under age 17, 189 deaths and thousands of serious adverse events were reported. The documents present data collected between Dec. 19, 2021, and June 18, 2022 (the "PSUR #3 period"), in addition to

cumulative data on adverse events and deaths that occurred among those who received the vaccine during clinical trials and during the post-marketing period, beginning December 2020 up until June 18, 2022.

During this time, Pfizer-BioNTech said it identified almost no safety signals and claimed the vaccine demonstrated over 91% "efficacy."

Remarking on the documents, Brian Hooker, Ph.D., P.E., senior director of science and research for Children's Health Defense, told The Defender:

"These adverse event reports are 'off the charts,' with myocarditis reports at over 10,000 and pericarditis reports at over 9,000.

"Historically, we know that this would be an under-ascertainment of the actual numbers. It is criminal for the EMA to keep this vaccine on the market."

According to an analysis by commentator and author Daniel Horowitz, the percentage of adverse events classified as serious was "well above the standard for safety signals usually pegged at 15%," and women reported adverse events at three times the rate of men.

Sixty percent of cases were reported with either "outcome unknown" or "not recovered," suggesting many of the injuries "were not transient," Horowitz said.

The highest number of cases occurred in the 31-50 age group, of which 92% did not have any comorbidities, making it very likely it was the vaccine causing "such widespread, sudden injury."

There were 3,280 fatalities among vaccine recipients in the combined cumulative period including the clinical trials and post-marketing, up to July 18, 2022.

According to Horowitz, the documents "show that Pfizer knew about a sickening level of injury early on," yet continued to distribute its COVID-19 vaccine.

The documents are not part of the ongoing court-ordered release of the so-called "Pfizer documents" in the U.S., but according to Horowitz, are pharmacovigilance documents requested by the EMA, the EU's drug regulator.

The documents were made available to an Austrian science and politics blog, TKP, following "a FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] request from an anonymous reader." They were subsequently published on March 4. However, once published, no European English-language media outlet appears to have reported on them.

As a result, they remained under the radar until recently, when several independent English-language bloggers discovered and published the documents.

Thousands of pediatric serious adverse events and deaths

The main Pfizer-BioNTech document revealed 9,605 adverse events (3,735 serious) during the PSUR #3 and 25 cases during the clinical trials among children ages 11 and younger. These included 20 fatalities, in children as young as 5 years old.

Causes of these fatalities included dyspnea, cardiac arrest, cardio-respiratory arrest, pyrexia and myocarditis, though "all events were assessed as unrelated" to the vaccine.

In one example listed in the document, an 11-year-old boy died of acute respiratory failure two days after the first dose of the vaccine.

In another case, a 6-year-old girl died seven days following her initial dose of complications that included renal impairment, epilepsy, apnea, seizure and "sudden death."

The document lists another case, that of a 6-year-old boy whose listed causes of death are myocarditis, cardio-respiratory arrest and COVID-19. He died seven days after the first dose of the vaccine, and although autopsy results were "pending," "the reporter concluded that the death 'had nothing to do' with the administration of BNT162b2 [the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine] and was due to natural causes."

For children ages 12-17, the document listed 21,945 adverse eventss (19,558 serious) in the post-marketing period and 15 cases during clinical trials. A total of 169 deaths were recorded, with listed causes including dyspnea, pyrexia, cardiac arrest, myocarditis, cardiac failure, seizure and shock.

Nevertheless, the document states "No new significant safety information was identified based on the review of the cases reported in the overall paediatric population."

'No safety signals' despites deaths, injuries of pregnant women and newborns

Pregnant and lactating women also were significantly affected. There were 3,642 post-authorization adverse events and 697 clinical trial adverse events in this population, including spontaneous abortion, fetal death, postpartum hemorrhage, premature separation of the placenta, premature labor or delivery, live birth with congenital anomalies and stillbirths. Nevertheless, the documentation again states, "There were no safety signals

regarding use in pregnant/lactating women that emerged from the review of these cases or the medical literature," despite two key admissions elsewhere in the documentation.

In one instance, the document stated, "The safety profile of the vaccine in pregnant and/or breastfeeding women was not studied in the pivotal clinical trial and the maternal clinical trial was terminated early due to participant recruitment difficulties."

And in another instance, Pfizer-BioNTech identified the following as "missing information":

"Use in pregnancy and while breastfeeding; Use in immunocompromised patients; Use in frail patients with co-morbidities … Use in patients with autoimmune or inflammatory disorders; Interaction with other vaccines; Long term safety data."

Pfizer-BioNTech stated a "commitment" to track "pregnancy outcome[s] in clinical trials."

Myocarditis and pericarditis deaths among children, young adults

A notable discrepancy appears in terms of reported cases of myocarditis in the clinical trials as compared to the post-marketing period — one myocarditis case (0.15% of all cases) is listed for the clinical trial period, while 5,422 cases (1.1% of all cases) and 5,458 serious events were reported in the PSUR #3 period.

Of these, 87 cases were fatal and 1,608 were listed as "not resolved." Among children and young adults, 48 cases were reported for those between the ages of 5 and 11 (two deaths), 366 among 12-15-year-olds (three deaths), 345 among 16-17-year-olds and 968 among 18-24-year-olds (four deaths).

In one instance, an 11-year-old girl developed myocarditis two days after her first dose and subsequently died, with the listed causes of death including myocarditis, respiratory failure, acute cardiac failure and cardio-respiratory arrest.

Separately, a 13-year-old boy developed myocarditis five days after his second dose, and subsequently died of myocarditis, cardiac arrest, multiple organ dysfunction syndrome, ventricular tachycardia and renal failure.

A 13-year-old girl with no medical history developed myocarditis six days after her first dose and also later died.

In the case of a 19-year-old male who developed myocarditis three days after his third dose and who eventually died, an autopsy "revealed extensive necrosis of the left ventricular myocardium (myocardial necrosis); myocarditis/fulminant myocarditis."

And a 26-year-old male who also took the flu vaccine developed myocarditis four days after his third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, and subsequently died. The listed causes of death included myocarditis, arrhythmia, inflammation and left ventricular dysfunction. Autopsy results "showed myocarditis."

Similarly, while no cases of pericarditis were recorded during the clinical trial, 4,156 were recorded during the PSUR #3 period, including 4,164 serious adverse events and 19 fatalities. This included 30 cases among 5-11-year-olds, 118 cases among 12-15-year-olds, 106 cases among 16-17-year-olds, 479 cases among 18-24-year-olds (and one death), and 417 cases among 25-29-year-olds, again including one death.

In one example, a 22-year-old male developed pericarditis 31 days after his second dose and eventually died of pericarditis and other causes, including multiple organ dysfunction syndrome, pericardial mass, pericardial effusion, malignant pericardial mesothelioma and right ventricular failure.

Numerous other cardiovascular adverse events were recorded, totaling 32,712 cases during the PSUR #3 period (496 fatal) and 27 during the clinical trials (two fatal — with none of the events listed as "related" to vaccination).

Causes of death included in this category include arrhythmia, cardiac failure and acute cardiac failure, cardiogenic shock, coronary artery disease, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS) and tachycardia.

Nevertheless, "No new significant safety information was identified."

Many 'very severe and very rare' adverse events identified

The 393-page confidential Pfizer document shows that Pfizer observed more than 10,000 categories of diagnosis, many "very severe and very rare," Horowitz wrote.

These include 73,542 cases of 264 categories of vascular disorders from the shots, many of which "are rare conditions," hundreds of categories of nervous system disorders, totaling 696,508 cases and 61,518 adverse events from well over 100 categories of eye disorders, "which is unusual for a vaccine injury," according to Horowitz.

In addition, "there were over 47,000 ear disorders, including almost 16,000 cases of tinnitus," "roughly 225,000 cases of skin and tissue disorders," "roughly 190,000 cases of respiratory disorders" and "over 178,000 cases of reproductive or breast disorders, including disorders you wouldn't expect, such as 506 cases of erectile dysfunction."

"Over 100,000 blood and lymphatic disorders, for both of which there's a wealth of literature linking them to the spike protein" were indicated, as well as "almost 127,000 cardiac disorders, running the gamut of about 270 categories of heart damage, including many rare disorders, in addition to myocarditis."

There were also "3,711 cases of tumors — benign and malignant," and "there were over 77,000 psychiatric disorders observed."

"What is so jarring is that there are hundreds of very rare neurological disorders that reflect something so systemically wrong with the shots, a reality that was clearly of no concern to the manufacturers and regulators alike," Horowitz wrote, referencing 68 listed cases of a rare diagnosis, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy.

In another example, the "Pharma Files" Substack identified 3,092 neoplasms, noting that "malignant neoplasms means cancer."

Pfizer-BioNTech usually identified 'no safety signal' despite thousands of deaths

Numerous deaths and serious adverse events were recorded for a wide range of other conditions:

- Stroke: 3,091 cases and 3,532 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 314 fatalities, and 19 cases during the clinical trial (one death).

The document stated, "Cerebral venous sinus thrombosis … and Cerebrovascular Accident/Stroke were evaluated as signals during the reporting period and were not determined to be risks causally associated with the vaccine … No additional safety signals … have emerged based on the review of these cases."

- Respiratory: 2,199 cases and 1,873 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 363 fatalities, and 33 cases during the clinical trial (four deaths). Serious adverse events included cardio-respiratory arrest, pneumonia, respiratory failure, acute respiratory failure, hypoxia and acute respiratory distress syndrome. Yet, "No safety signals have emerged based on the review of these cases."
- Bell's palsy: 733 cases were reported during PSUR #3, in addition to 1,428 cases of facial paralysis. Six cases were fatal, with all victims over age 60. One additional case of Bell's palsy, in a 75-year-old female from the U.S., was recorded in the clinical trial but was deemed "not related" to her vaccination. Again, "No new significant safety information was identified."
- Neurological: 5,111 cases and 4,973 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 67 fatalities, and 15 cases during the clinical trial. Once more, "No safety signals have emerged based on the review of these cases."
- Immune-mediated/autoimmune adverse events: 11,726 cases and 8,445 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 133 fatalities, and 19 cases during the clinical trial. Serious adverse events included thrombocytopenia, interstitial lung disease, cerebral hemorrhage, encephalitis, multiple organ dysfunction syndrome, renal failure, pneumonia and pulmonary embolism. Yet, "No new safety signals have emerged."
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome: 207 cases and 210 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 56 deaths, with 35 involving the elderly. In addition, 38 cases were reported in children. Nevertheless, "No new safety signals have emerged based on a review of these cases [or] literature."

Pfizer-BioNTech stated a "commitment" for "closely monitoring multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children and in adults … and reporting of new cases."

- Thromboembolic adverse events: 6,102 cases and 6,724 serious adverse events during PSUR #3, including 265 fatalities, and 17 cases during the clinical trial (one death). Serious adverse events included pulmonary embolism, thrombosis and deep vein thrombosis. Again, "No safety signals have emerged based on the review of these cases."

Elsewhere in the document, the case of a 14-year-old male who died of peripheral swelling after getting the COVID-19 vaccine was mentioned, with no additional details.

In another example, a 67-year-old male "with a history of diabetes and idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura" suffered chest and gastrointestinal discomfort less than 30 minutes after receiving his third dose of the vaccine. A diagnosis of anaphylaxis was made, while an electrocardiogram showed "signs of a myocardial infarction." He later sustained cardiac arrest and died 12 days following his vaccination.

Moreover, 204 fatalities (and 24,077 cases) of vaccination failure, 81 deaths from "vaccination stress," 24 deaths (and 1,402 cases) of suspected vaccination failure, two deaths from glomerulonephritis and nephrotic syndrome, two deaths (1,326 cases) from "medication error" and 166 deaths from "other" adverse events — mostly pyrexia — were recorded.

Pfizer-BioNTech and EMA: 'nothing to see here'

Pfizer and BioNTech claimed that the overall efficacy of their COVID-19 vaccine for the PSUR #3 period was 91.3% — and 100% for some populations.

Moreover, only one safety signal was definitively identified: hearing loss, with Pfizer-BioNTech committing to perform a "safety evaluation of tinnitus and hearing loss."

Two other conditions, myocarditis and pericarditis, were determined to be an "important identified risk," while irritability was determined to be an "identified risk (not important)."

"A statement regarding the reporting rates of myocarditis and pericarditis after primary series and booster doses" was added to their vaccine's European product label.

Labeling was changed for Guillain-Barré syndrome, but in Japan. The document stated:

"Although not considered by definition a regulatory action taken for safety reasons because it does not significantly impact the benefit risk balance of use of the product in authorised populations, due to the receipt of spontaneous reports of Guillain-Barre syndrome (GBS) after vaccination with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines including BNT162b2 … Japan has required class changes to include GBS in the important precautions section of the Japan package insert."

Despite the large number of deaths and serious adverse events, Pfizer and BioNTech wrote, "Based on the available safety and efficacy/effectiveness data from the reporting interval for BNT162b2, the overall benefit-risk profile of BNT162b2 remains favorable" and that "no further changes … or additional risk minimization activities are warranted."

The EMA appears to have agreed with this conclusion. In its "assessment report," its Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee (PRAC) wrote that "The benefit-risk balance for the use of Comirnaty in its authorized indication remains unchanged."

"The PRAC considers that the risk-benefit balance of medicinal products containing tozinameran (Comirnaty) remains unchanged and therefore recommends the maintenance of the marketing authorisation(s)," the PRAC added.

However, Horowitz argues that the documents "show that Pfizer knew about a sickening level of injury early on," yet continued to distribute its COVID-19 vaccine.

Earlier this month, BioNTech was sued in Germany by a woman alleging injuries from the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The lawsuit demands at least 150,000 euro ($161,500) in damages for bodily harm and unspecified compensation for material damages.

Michael Nevradakis, Ph.D., based in Athens, Greece, is a senior reporter for The Defender and part of the rotation of hosts for CHD.TV's "Good Morning CHD." For 10 years, he produced and hosted the "Dialogos" radio program and podcast, and he has previously been published by The Guardian, the Huffington Post, the Daily Kos, Truthout, Mint Press News and other outlets. He completed his Ph.D. in media studies at the University of Texas in 2018 and holds a Master's degree in public policy from Stony Brook University. He has taught at various institutions of higher education in Greece and the U.S.

**Cancer Taking Off 'Like Wildfire':
Unsettling Insights from Pathologist
Dr. Ryan Cole**

WHAT'S In The VIALS?

AMERICAN THOUGHT LEADERS

Will Invasive Fungal Infections Be the Last of Us?

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230629-will-invasive-fungal-infections-be-the-last-of-us

June 29 – "The Last of Us," a post-apocalyptic drama television series based on the 2013 video game by the same name, is set twenty years into a pandemic caused by a mass fungal infection, which causes its hosts to transform into zombie-like creatures and collapses society.

Do the video game and TV series describe a completely fictional scenario? Experts say that, creative embellishments notwithstanding, "The Last of Us" describes a situation which is closer to reality than we would like to believe, or hope.

In a new article, Roxana Rodríguez Stewart and her co-authors discuss the growing threat of invasive fungal infections and the importance of antifungal stewardship. The article, "Will Invasive Fungal Infections be the Last of Us?" was published inthe *Expert Review of Anti-infective Therapy*:

Pandora Report writes:

> "The video game-turned-HBO show 'The Last of Us' is a fanciful representation of a zombie apocalypse caused by a fungal infection. Although *Ophiocordyceps*, the 'zombie fungi' featured in the show, do not infect vertebrates, the show serves as a reminder that many fungi can cause life-threatening invasive fungal infections (IFIs).

> *Candida* and *Aspergillus* species are the most common and well-known causes of IFIs, but at least 300 species of opportunistic human pathogenic yeasts and molds exist."

> "Each year, IFIs are responsible for over 1.5 million deaths globally and, in the United States alone, impose health-care costs ranging from five to seven billion dollars [1,2]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of death from fungal infections have increased [3], and the burden of IFIs is poised to grow given the expanding population of patients living with immunosuppressive conditions (e.g. solid organ and stem cell transplantation), increasing antifungal resistance, and potential climate-change related expansion of the geographic ranges in which pathogenic fungi live. Despite the morbidity and mortality associated with fungal infections and their growing public health importance, we still have much to learn about their diagnosis and management. In this review, we discuss gaps and global disparities in fungal laboratory capacity including antifungal susceptibility testing, the paucity of fungal surveillance, and the importance of antifungal stewardship, all against the backdrop of increasing antifungal resistance and a limited armamentarium of antifungal therapies."

Personal Protective Equipment and Personal Protective Technology Product Standardization for a Resilient Public Health Supply Chain

Proceedings of a 2023 Workshop

Source: https://nap.nationalacademies.org/download/27094

The National Strategy for a Resilient Public Health Supply Chain lays out the U.S. government's vision to protect the health and security of Americans by ensuring a supply chain for personal protective equipment (PPE) and technology (PPT), medical devices, medicines, and other public health supplies that are resilient against disruptions from pandemics and other biological threats. Additional forethought and collaboration amongst policymakers, manufacturers, and users are needed to make PPE and PPT innovation, standardization, stockpiling, and use more resilient.

The National Academies convened a public workshop in March 2023 to explore innovative approaches and technologies needed to update and streamline the U.S. standardization system for PPE and PPT in support of supply chain resiliency. Discussions included ways to improve the effectiveness, safety, supply stability, and accessibility of PPE and PPT designed for use in healthcare settings, by critical infrastructure workers, and by the general public. This Proceedings of a Workshop summarizes the discussions held during the workshop.
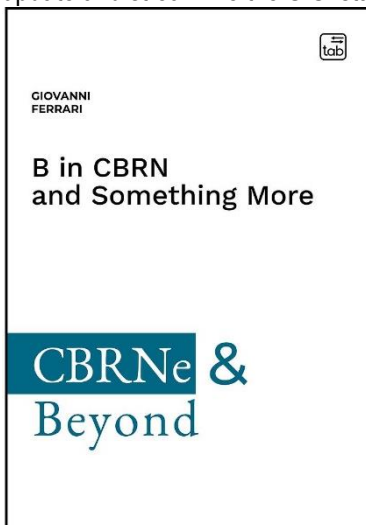
BOOK – "B in CBRN and Something More" (2023)

Author: Giovanni Ferrari
Source: https://www.tabedizioni.it/shop/product/b-in-cbrn-and-something-more-763

There are also fads in the type of topics that institutions set out to study. Now "Resilience" is going great, before the specter of a CBRN terrorist attack has long been at the center of discussions. Then comes Covid-19, then Russia invades Ukraine, and we realize that, in the face of the real facts of human history, often the words spoken have been spent in the wind and no effective preparations have been made. This short text focuses on the B of CBRN, trying to make it clear what an ugly beast it is and that Sars-Cov-2 was ultimately a domestic pet compared to other possible biological threats. We have to be prepared.

Biotoxin Detection Using Cell-Based Sensors

**By Pratik Banerjee, Spyridon Kintzios and Balabhaskar Prabhakarpandian**
Toxins 2013, *5*(12), 2366-2383
Source: https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6651/5/12/2366

Abstract

Cell-based biosensors (CBBs) utilize the principles of cell-based assays (CBAs) by employing living cells for detection of different analytes from environment, food, clinical, or other sources. For toxin detection, CBBs are emerging as unique alternatives to other

Figure 1. Generalized working principle of cellular sensors.
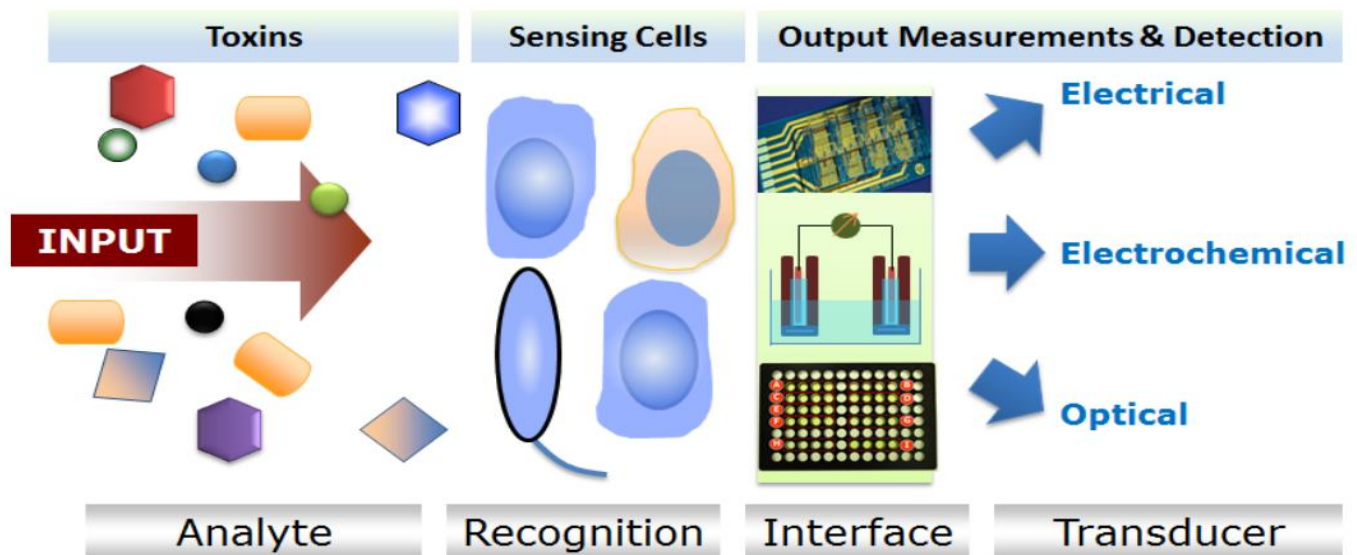
analytical methods. The main advantage of using CBBs for probing biotoxins and toxic agents is that CBBs respond to the toxic exposures in the manner related to actual physiologic responses of the vulnerable subjects. The results obtained from CBBs are based on the toxin-cell interactions, and therefore, reveal functional information (such as mode of action, toxic potency, bioavailability, target tissue or organ, etc.) about the toxin. CBBs incorporate both prokaryotic (bacteria) and eukaryotic (yeast, invertebrate and vertebrate) cells. To create

CBB devices, living cells are directly integrated onto the biosensor platform. The sensors report the cellular responses upon exposures to toxins and the resulting cellular signals are transduced by secondary transducers generating optical or electrical signals outputs followed by appropriate read-outs. Examples of the layout and operation of cellular biosensors for detection of selected biotoxins are summarized.

A New Bioassay for the Detection of Paralytic and Amnesic Biotoxins Based on Motor Behavior Impairments of Zebrafish Larvae

By Javiera F. De la Paz, Nicolás O. Zambrano, Fernando C. Ortiz and Alejandra Llanos-Rivera

Abstract

The global concern about the increase of harmful algal bloom events and the possible impacts on food safety and aquatic ecosystems presents the necessity for the development of more accessible techniques for biotoxin detection for screening purposes. Considering

the numerous advantages that zebrafish present as a biological model and particularly as a toxicants sentinel, we designed a sensitive and accessible test to determine the activity of paralytic and amnesic biotoxins using zebrafish larvae immersion. The **ZebraBioTox bioassay** is based on the automated recording of larval locomotor activity using an IR microbeam locomotion detector, and manual assessment of four complementary responses under a simple stereoscope: survival, periocular edema, body balance, and touch response. This 24 h acute static bioassay was set up in 96-well microplates using 5 dpf zebrafish larvae. For paralytic toxins, a significant decrease in locomotor activity and touch response of the larvae was detected, allowing a detection threshold of 0.1–0.2 µg/mL STXeq. In the case of the amnesic toxin the effect was reversed, detecting hyperactivity with a detection threshold of 10 µg/mL domoic acid. We propose that this assay might be used as a complementary tool for environmental safety monitoring.

Predicting Biosecurity Threats: Deployment and Detection of Biological Weapons

By Kaitlin M. Volk and Trajan J. Gering

Abstract

Understanding what kinds of biological weapons can be made with what sort of technology and by whom is an important component of biosecurity. An equally important component is understanding the different potential targets a biological weapon could be designed to attack, how the weapon would be deployed against these targets, and the available strategies to detect the creation and deployment of an illegal biological weapon. Understanding how a weapon could be deployed against specific targets affords decision makers a better picture of the current state and capabilities of biowarfare and bioterrorism that need to be protected against. Understanding current detection capabilities allows for a more informed discussion on biosecurity tools, and, more importantly, allows for the identification of critical gaps and research needs to improve risk-screening, detection, environmental remediation, and various other normatively beneficial and legitimate uses of emerging biotechnologies (Trump et al. 2020a). These two topic areas are discussed in this chapter.

Detection Methodologies for Pathogen and Toxins: A Review

By Md Eshrat E. Alahi and Subhas Chandra Mukhopadhyay

Sensors (Basel). 2017 Aug; 17(8): 1885.
Source: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5580025/

Abstract

Pathogen and toxin-contaminated foods and beverages are a major source of illnesses, even death, and have a significant economic impact worldwide. Human health is always under a potential threat, including from biological warfare, due to these dangerous pathogens. The agricultural and food production chain consists of many steps such as harvesting, handling, processing, packaging, storage, distribution, preparation, and consumption. Each step is susceptible to threats of environmental contamination or failure to safeguard the processes. The production process can be controlled in the food and agricultural sector, where smart sensors can play a major role, ensuring greater food quality and safety by low cost, fast, reliable, and profitable methods of detection. Techniques for the detection of pathogens and toxins may vary in cost, size, and specificity, speed of response, sensitivity, and precision. Smart sensors can detect, analyse and quantify at molecular levels contents of different biological origin and ensure quality of foods against spiking with pesticides, fertilizers, dioxin, modified organisms, anti-nutrients, allergens, drugs and so on. This paper reviews different methodologies to detect pathogens and toxins in foods and beverages.

Proteomic Methods of Detection and Quantification of Protein Toxins

By Miloslava Duracova, Jana Klimentova, Alena Fucikova, and Jiri Dresler

Toxins (Basel). 2018 Mar; 10(3): 99.
Source: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5869387/

Abstract

Biological toxins are a heterogeneous group of compounds that share commonalities with biological and chemical agents. Among them, protein toxins represent a considerable, diverse set. They cover a broad range of molecular weights from less than 1000 Da to more than 150 kDa. This review aims to compare conventional detection methods of protein toxins such as in vitro bioassays with proteomic methods, including immunoassays and mass spectrometry-based techniques and their combination. Special emphasis is given to toxins falling into a group of selected agents, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, such as *Staphylococcal enterotoxins*, *Bacillus anthracis* toxins, *Clostridium botulinum* toxins, *Clostridium perfringens* epsilon toxin, ricin from *Ricinus communis*, Abrin from *Abrus precatorius* or control of trade in dual-use items in the European Union, including lesser known protein toxins such as Viscumin from *Viscum album*. The analysis of protein toxins and monitoring for biological threats, i.e., the deliberate spread of infectious microorganisms or toxins through water, food, or the air, requires rapid and reliable methods for the early identification of these agents.

Ask ChatGPT

Me: What are the available methods to detect biological toxins?

ChatGPT

There are several methods available to detect biological toxins, depending on the specific toxin and the desired level of detection sensitivity. Here are some commonly used methods:

1. **Immunoassays:** These are based on the recognition and binding of specific antibodies to toxins. Immunoassays include enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA), lateral flow assays, and immunochromatographic assays. These methods are relatively simple, rapid, and cost-effective.
2. **Mass spectrometry:** Mass spectrometry is a powerful technique used for the detection and identification of toxins. It involves ionizing the toxin molecules and analyzing the resulting mass-to-charge ratio (m/z) of the ions. Mass spectrometry can provide highly accurate and specific detection but requires sophisticated equipment and expertise.
3. **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR):** PCR is a molecular biology technique used to amplify specific DNA sequences. It can be used to detect toxin genes or the presence of toxin-producing

organisms. PCR-based methods offer high sensitivity and specificity, but they require prior knowledge of the toxin's genetic sequence.

4. **Biosensors:** Biosensors are analytical devices that integrate a biological recognition element (e.g., antibodies, enzymes, or whole cells) with a transducer to convert the biochemical interaction into a measurable signal. Biosensors can detect toxins in real-time and are suitable for on-site testing.

5. **Mass cytometry:** Mass cytometry, also known as CyTOF (Cytometry by Time-Of-Flight), combines flow cytometry with mass spectrometry. It enables the simultaneous measurement of multiple parameters at the single-cell level, allowing the detection of toxins and their effects on cells.

6. **Microbial assays:** These assays involve the use of living organisms, such as bacteria or yeast, to detect toxins. The presence of toxins can be determined based on the growth or inhibition of the microorganisms. These assays are often used for the detection of bacterial toxins, such as botulinum toxin.

7. **Biochemical assays:** Various biochemical assays, such as enzymatic assays or functional assays, can be employed to detect the activity of toxins. These methods measure the specific biochemical reactions or functional changes induced by the toxins.

It's worth noting that the selection of the detection method depends on factors such as the toxin of interest, the sample type, the required sensitivity and specificity, the available resources, and the expertise of the user. Different methods may complement each other in a comprehensive toxin detection strategy.

Me: Are there portable toxin detectors?

ChatGPT

Yes, there are portable toxin detectors available that can be used for on-site or field testing. These portable devices are designed to provide rapid and convenient detection of toxins in various environments. Here are a few examples:

1. **Handheld Immunoassay-based Detectors:** These are compact devices that utilize immunoassay-based technologies, such as ELISA or lateral flow assays, to detect toxins. They often employ disposable cartridges or test strips that are inserted into the device for analysis. These detectors provide quick results and are commonly used for the detection of specific toxins like ricin, botulinum toxin, or mycotoxins.

2. **Biosensors:** Portable biosensors have been developed for the detection of toxins. They typically consist of a biological recognition element, such as antibodies or enzymes, integrated with a miniaturized transducer. Biosensors can detect toxins in a variety of samples, including food, water, or air, and offer rapid and sensitive detection in a portable format.

3. Smartphone-based Detectors: With the advancements in mobile technology, there are toxin detection systems that can be connected to smartphones. These systems utilize the smartphone's camera and processing capabilities to analyze detection assays or test strips. Smartphone-based detectors are often used in conjunction with specific apps to provide real-time results.

4. **Handheld Mass Spectrometers:** Portable mass spectrometers have been developed for on-site toxin detection. These devices are smaller and more portable versions of traditional mass spectrometers. They can analyze samples directly or utilize sample preparation cartridges for rapid analysis. Handheld mass spectrometers can provide highly accurate identification and quantification of toxins but are generally more complex and expensive compared to other portable devices.

5. **Microfluidic-based Detectors:** Microfluidic systems, also known as lab-on-a-chip devices, are miniaturized platforms that integrate various analytical functions into a small device. Microfluidic-based detectors can be designed to detect toxins using different detection principles, such as immunoassays, PCR, or enzymatic assays. They offer advantages of miniaturization, portability, and rapid analysis.

These portable toxin detectors are particularly useful in scenarios where rapid and on-site testing is required, such as in food safety inspections, environmental monitoring, or biosecurity applications. They provide convenience and enable real-time decision-making, reducing the need for sample transportation and laboratory-based analysis.

SV40 Virus Linked to Multiple Cancers Found in mRNA Vaccines

Source: https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/sv40-virus-cancers-mrna-vaccines-cola/

June 22 – Microbiologist Kevin McKernan, a former researcher for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Human Genome Project, said he discovered simian virus 40 (SV40), a virus found in monkey

and humans, in mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. SV40 has been linked to cancer in humans, including mesotheliomas, lymphomas and cancers of the brain and bone.

- Microbiologist Kevin McKernan — a former researcher and team leader for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Human Genome Project — has discovered massive DNA contamination in the mRNA COVID-19 shots, including simian virus 40 (SV40) promoters.
- SV40 has been linked to cancer in humans, including mesotheliomas, lymphomas and cancers of the brain and bone. In 2002, the Lancet published evidence linking polio vaccines contaminated with SV40 to Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. According to the authors, the vaccine may be responsible for up to 50% of the 55,000 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cases diagnosed each year.
- The level of contamination varies depending on the platform used to measure it, but no matter which method is used, the level of DNA contamination is significantly higher than the regulatory limits in both Europe and the U.S. The highest level of DNA contamination found was 30%.
- The finding of DNA means the mRNA COVID-19 shots may have the ability to alter the human genome.
- Even if genetic modification does not occur, the fact that you're getting foreign DNA into your cells poses a risk in and of itself. Partial expression could occur or it might interfere with other transcription translations that are already in the cell. Cytoplasmic transfection can also allow for genetic manipulation, as the nucleus disassembles and exchanges cellular components with the cytosol during cell division.

Background: What is SV40?

In 2002, the Lancet published evidence linking polio vaccines contaminated with SV40 to Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. According to the authors, the vaccine may be responsible for up to half the 55,000 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cases diagnosed each year.

How did this simian (monkey) virus get into the human population? According to the late Dr. Maurice Hilleman, a leading vaccine developer, Merck inadvertently unleashed the virus via their polio vaccine. It's unclear exactly when SV40 was eliminated from the polio vaccine. The timing also varies from country to country. For example, SV40-contaminated polio vaccines were administered in Italy as recently as 1999. As reported in a Lancet book review of "The Virus and the Vaccine: The True Story of a Cancer-Causing Money Virus, Contaminated Polio Vaccine and the Millions of Americans Exposed": "By 1960, scientists and vaccine manufacturers knew that monkey kidneys were sewers of simian viruses. Such contamination often spoiled cultures, including those of an NIH [National Institutes of Health] researcher named Bernice Eddy, who worked on vaccine safety … her discovery … threatened one of the USA's most important public-health programs. … "Eddy tried to get word out to colleagues but was muzzled and stripped of her vaccine regulatory duties and her laboratory … [Two] Merck researchers, Ben Sweet and Maurice Hilleman, soon identified the rhesus virus later named SV40 — the carcinogenic agent that had eluded Eddy.

"In 1963, U.S. authorities decided to switch to African green monkeys, which are not natural hosts of SV40, to produce polio vaccine. In the mid-1970s, after limited epidemiological studies, authorities concluded that although SV40 caused cancer in hamsters, it didn't seem to do so in people. "Fast forward to the 1990s: Michele Carbone, then at NIH, was working on how SV40 induces cancers in animals. One of these was mesothelioma, a rare cancer of the pleura thought in people to be caused mainly by asbestos. The orthodoxy held that SV40 didn't cause human cancers. "Emboldened by a 1992 NEJM paper that found DNA 'footprints' of SV40 in childhood brain tumors, Carbone tested human mesothelioma tumor biopsies at the National Cancer Institute: 60% contained SV40 DNA. In most cases, the monkey virus was active and producing proteins.

"He published his results in Oncogene in May 1994, but the NIH declined to publicize them … Carbone … moved to Loyola University. There he discovered how SV40 disables tumor suppressor genes in human mesothelioma, and published his results in Nature Medicine in July 1997. Studies in Italy, Germany, and the USA also showed associations between SV40 and human cancers."

This is how it goes!

Indonesia (July 04) – The Gunungkidul Regency Health Agency reports the fatality, a 73-year-old man, had died from **anthrax** after he had consumed meat from his own cow after it died from an illness. Head of the Gunungkidul Regency Health Agency, Dewi Irawati said, "Then, we found that the patient also distributed the meat to dozens of other residents in his neighborhood. Thus, we did blood tests on **125 residents and found 85 of them infected**."

"Most of them have shown symptoms like diarrhea, sores on the skin, and small reddish lumps or swelling appearing on their hands. But now they have been taking antibiotics," said the official.

COVID: How Incorrect Assumptions and Poor Foresight Hampered the U.K. Pandemic Preparedness

By Robert Van Der Meer

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230705-covid-how-incorrect-assumptions-and-poor-foresight-hampered-the-u-k-pandemic-preparedness

July 05 – Matt Hancock, the former health secretary, has told the recently opened COVID-19 Inquiry that the UK's pandemic planning was "completely wrong". According to Hancock, the doctrine was "to plan for the consequences of a disaster" rather than stopping or containing the virus in the first place.

While there is truth in this claim, it doesn't give us the whole picture. Hancock was repeatedly asked during his appearance about something called Exercise Cygnus. In 2016, the UK government engaged in a series of exercises including Cygnus to assess their preparedness and response to a pandemic outbreak of influenza.

As the global scale of the COVID pandemic was starting to become apparent in the first half of February 2020, the UK applied the lessons from these exercises to plan for a wide range of scenarios. Based on the scientific evidence available at that time, they anticipated that a "reasonable worst-case scenario" could involve up to 80% of the UK population being infected (with only 50% of those infected showing symptoms). However, it was hoped that the majority of cases would have relatively mild disease.

This information was contained in planning assumptions labelled "officially sensitive" that were shared between a range of healthcare authorities and that I had access to at the time. Some of the figures were also published in the media.

The concept of "herd immunity" played a key role in the existing mathematical models. Herd immunity is the idea that once a sufficiently large proportion of the susceptible population is infected and subsequently acquires immunity, the whole population becomes protected. The thinking was that herd immunity for COVID might be achieved once 80% of the UK population had been infected, or perhaps even earlier.

Underlying all this was the assumption that, in the absence of effective vaccines at that time, the case fatality rate from the new virus (the proportion of infected people who end up dying) would not be so high that herd immunity could only be achieved at the cost of many lives.

Unfortunately, the actual COVID mortality figures – first from China, then other east and southeast Asian countries, and by the second half of February 2020 also from Italy – showed that the initial case fatality rate of COVID was much higher than had been modelled in the UK scenarios.

Without effective vaccines, any attempt at herd immunity had to be abandoned as too many people would have died in the meantime.

Flawed Assumptions

The assumption that any new viral pandemic would develop along similar lines as previous influenza pandemics was arguably the key flaw in the UK's planning doctrine.

Countries that had been significantly affected by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) outbreak in 2002–2004 – principally China but also other Asian countries – didn't make the same mistake. Those countries recognized important biological similarities between COVID (or SARS-CoV-2) and SARS (or SARS-CoV-1) and quickly took action against COVID by means of intensive testing and quarantine policies.

In contrast, the UK lost valuable time between mid-February and mid-March while COVID cases and subsequent deaths were rapidly beginning to rise. The effect on older adults and other vulnerable people in UK care homes was especially severe.

In the end, the UK's first wave of COVID was only slowed and eventually stopped by the introduction of a lockdown in the fourth week of March 2020.

Poor Planning

Hancock's statement raises a key question about the extent to which errors in the UK's pandemic planning could have been foreseen at the time. Notably, the UK's healthcare planning authorities could have taken a wider view of the potential nature of viral pandemics. The earlier Sars outbreak had been largely confined to China, although it spread to more than 20 other countries through worldwide air travel, and was contained within a few short months. Therefore, the risk of future outbreaks of this type in the UK was regarded as relatively low. Nevertheless, it wouldn't have been unreasonable to include the global re-emergence of a Sars-type virus as one of the possible, albeit more extreme, pandemic scenarios analyzed in the UK's planning exercises in 2016. Even given the wrong assumption regarding the nature of the new virus, some issues could have been anticipated better. For example, it was well known that the supply chain for

personal protective equipment (PPE), which is vital for health and care staff, had become increasingly dependent on low-cost suppliers in China. If the UK's pandemic planning exercises had taken a more global perspective, the breakdown in the PPE supply chain in the spring of 2020, which caused huge financial waste (and apparent corruption), could have been better anticipated. Other questions, such as when effective COVID vaccines would become available, were much harder to predict.

In sum, no planning exercise can cover all eventualities. But a key requirement for policymakers should be to learn as fast and effectively as possible while events unfold.

The business concept of "dynamic capability" – that is, an organization's ability to configure and reconfigure its assets, processes and capabilities to respond effectively to rapidly changing external circumstances – is useful here. Building and strengthening this capability should be a prerequisite for policymakers and planners in government.

In regards to Hancock's comment that the planning was "completely wrong", one could say that the UK plans were indeed flawed in their key assumption (of influenza rather than a coronavirus pandemic), but also that policymakers should have learned the true nature of the new virus more quickly than they did.

Robert Van Der Meer is Professor of Management Science, University of Strathclyde.

Batch-dependent safety of the BNT162b2 mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

By Max Schmeling, Vibeke Manniche, and Peter Riis Hansen

To the Editor,

Vaccination has been widely implemented for mitigation of coronavirus disease-2019 (Covid-19), and by 11 November 2022, 701 million doses of the BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech) had been administered and linked with 971,021 reports of suspected adverse effects (SAEs) in the European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA).[1] Vaccine vials with individual doses are supplied in batches with stringent quality control to ensure batch and dose uniformity.[2] Clinical data on individual vaccine batch levels have not been reported and batch-dependent variation in the clinical efficacy and safety of authorized vaccines would appear to be highly unlikely. However, not least in view of the emergency use market authorization and rapid implementation of large-scale vaccination programs, the possibility of batch-dependent variation appears worthy of investigation. We therefore examined rates of SAEs between different BNT162b2 vaccine batches administered in Denmark (population 5.8 million) from 27 December 2020 to 11 January 2022.

Data on all SAE cases with corresponding vaccine batch labels reported to the Danish Medical Agency (DKMA) and classified by the DKMA according to SAE seriousness, and numbers of BNT162b2 doses in individual vaccine batches registered by the Danish Serum Institute, respectively, are publicly available and were retrieved upon request. The DKMA-managed spontaneous SAE reporting system accepts reports of SAEs from any source, for example healthcare providers, patients and other members of the public. SAEs are assigned Medical Dictionary for Regulatory Activities (MedDRA) terms that do not necessarily correspond to verified medical diagnoses, and more than 1 SAE may be assigned to a report. SAE seriousness was classified as non-serious, serious (hospitalization or prolongation of existing hospitalization, life-threatening illness, permanent disability or congenital malformation) or SAE-related death respectively. The study relied exclusively on the secondary use of these anonymized data and was thus exempt from research ethics board review. SAEs were counted on a batch level by linking individual SAEs to the batch label(s) of BNT162b dose(s) that the subject had received. The total number of SAEs associated with each batch was divided by the number of doses in the batch to obtain the rate of SAEs per 1000 doses. Since the observed relationship between the numbers of SAEs and BNT162b2 vaccine doses was highly heterogeneous, conventional regression statistics were not considered to be applicable. Therefore, heterogeneity in the relationship between the numbers of SAEs and doses per vaccine batch was assessed by log-transformation followed by non-hierarchical cluster analysis and general linear model (GLM) test for differences in SAE rates between batches. Reporting of the study conforms to broad EQUATOR guidelines.[3]

A total of 10,793,766 doses were administered to 4,026,575 persons with the use of 52 different BNT162b2 vaccine batches (2340–814,320 doses per batch) and 43,496 SAEs were registered in 13,635 persons, equaling 3.19 ± 0.03 (mean ± SEM) SAEs per person. [Correction added on 09 June 2023, after first online publication: The total number of doses and patient counts were corrected in the preceding statement]. In each person, individual SAEs were associated with vaccine doses from 1.531 ± 0.004 batches resulting in a total of 66,587 SAEs distributed between the 52 batches. Batch labels were incompletely registered or missing for 7.11% of SAEs, leaving 61,847 batch-identifiable SAEs for

further analysis of which 14,509 (23.5%) were classified as severe SAEs and 579 (0.9%) were SAE-related deaths. Unexpectedly, rates of SAEs per 1000 doses varied considerably between vaccine batches with 2.32 (0.09–3.59) (median [interquartile range]) SAEs per 1000 doses, and significant heterogeneity ($p < .0001$) was observed in the relationship between numbers of SAEs per 1000 doses and numbers of doses in the individual batches. Three predominant trendlines were discerned, with noticeable lower SAE rates in larger vaccine batches and additional batch-dependent heterogeneity in the distribution of SAE seriousness between the batches representing the three trendlines (Figure 1). Compared to the rates of all SAEs, serious SAEs and SAE-related deaths per 1.000 doses were much less frequent and numbers of these SAEs per 1000 doses displayed considerably greater variability between batches, with lesser separation between the three trendlines (not shown).

The observed variation in SAE rates and seriousness between BTN162b2 vaccine batches in this nationwide study was contrary to the expected homogenous rate and distribution of SAEs between batches. In Denmark and other EU/EEA countries, vaccine quality is monitored according to Official Control Authority Batch Release (OCABR) guidelines and to our knowledge, potential differences in BNT162b2 vaccine batch clinical safety or effectiveness have not been reported previously, for example in pre-authorization trials and subsequent population-based studies.[4, 5] Such effects may be easier to detect in small countries like Denmark where BNT162b2 vaccines during the study period were generally provided in several smaller batches. Also, regulatory monitoring and scientific interest in COVID-19 vaccine safety have primarily focused on serious adverse events, for example myocarditis.[6] In any case, identification of such effects evidently requires that observed adverse events are linked with the respective individual batch labels and sizes (dose numbers). Previously, variation in the production (culture growth) of the Bacille Calmette-Guérin vaccine has been shown to influence important immunological effects of this vaccine,[7] and two cases of myocarditis have been reported in two young males after receiving mRNA-1273 COVID-19 vaccine (Moderna) from the same vaccine batch on the same day.[8] Indeed, variations (batch-to-batch, vial-to-vial and even dose-to-dose) in vaccines may occur as a result of variabilities and practice breaches in, for example vaccine manufacturing, storage, transportation, clinical handling and control aspects, and in 2021, three lots of the mRNA1273 vaccine totalling more than 1.6 million doses were recalled in Japan after 39 vials of the vaccine were found to contain foreign materials.[9] Leaked and contested data have also suggested that some early commercial batches of the BNT162b2 vaccine contained lower than expected levels of intact mRNA.[10]
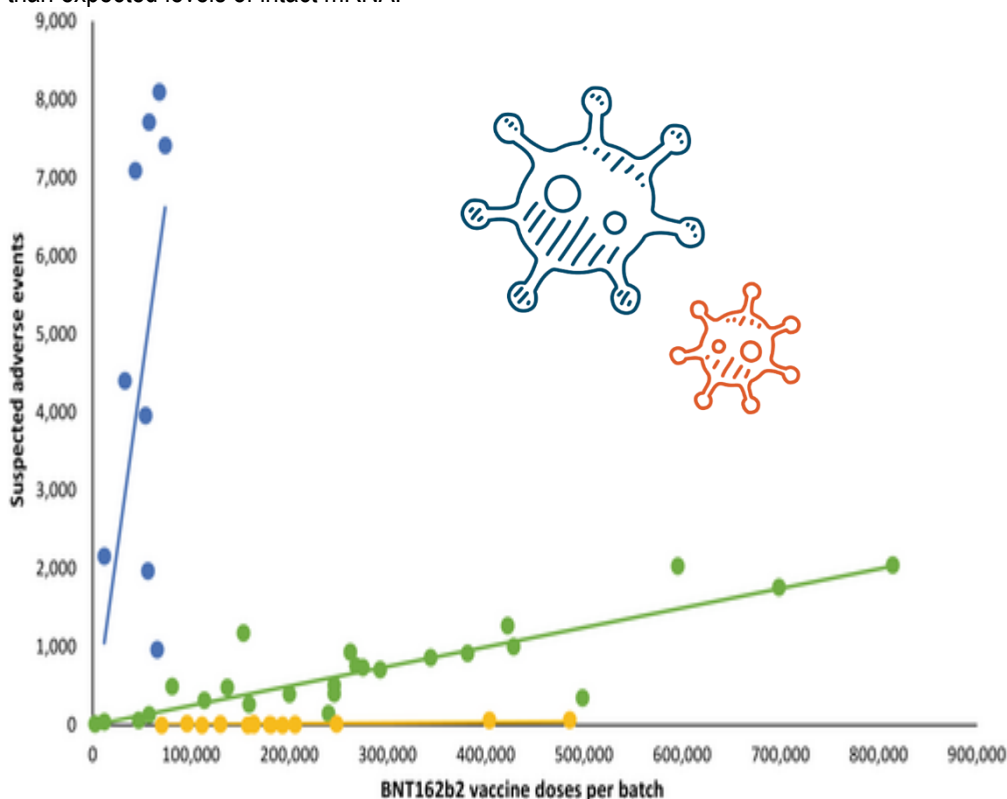
Numbers of suspected adverse events (SAEs) after BNT612b2 mRNA vaccination in Denmark (27 December 2020–11 January 2022) according to the number of doses per vaccine batch. Each dot represents a single vaccine batch. Trendlines are linear regression lines. Blue: $R^2 = 0.78$, $\beta = 0.0898$ (95% confidence interval [CI] 0.0514–0.1281), green: $R^2 = 0.89$, $\beta = 0.0025$ (95% CI 0.0021–0.0029), yellow: $R^2 = 0.68$, $\beta = 0.000087$ (95% CI 0.000056–0.000118). Vaccine batches representing the blue, green and yellow trendlines comprised 4.22%, 63.69% and 32.09% of all vaccine doses, respectively, with 70.78%, 27.49% and 47.15% (blue trendline), 28.84%, 71.50% and 51.99% (green trendline), and 0.38%, 1.01%, and 0.86% (yellow trendline) of all SAEs, serious SAEs, and SAE-related deaths, respectively.

The present preliminary findings must be interpreted in the light of several limitations. The DKMA-managed spontaneous SAE reporting system in Denmark is a passive surveillance system akin to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) in the US, and reports from these systems are subject to

reporting biases, with potential for both under- and over-reporting, as well as incomplete data and variable quality of the reported information.[11, 12] Owing to these inherent limitations, signals detected by these systems must be considered to be hypothesis-generating and generally cannot be used to establish causality.[11-14] In addition, in the present study, the SAE case history of prior COVID-19 was unknown, and specific SAE types (MedDRA system organ class etc.), demographics of SAE cases, relationships of SAEs with consecutive vaccine doses in individuals cases, temporal trends in the observed batch-dependency of SAEs, and batch-dependent effects on vaccine effectiveness, respectively, were not examined. Notably, to our knowledge, the Danish Serum Institute has not issued recalls of BNT162b2 vaccine batches. In conclusion, the results suggest the existence of a batch-dependent safety signal for the BNT162b2 vaccine, and more studies are warranted to explore this preliminary observation and its consequences.

Real-time environmental surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 aerosols

By Joseph V. Puthussery, Dishit P. Ghumra, Kevin R. McBrearty, et al.
Nature Communications volume 14, Article number: 3692 (2023) | 10 July 2023
Source: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-39419-z

Abstract

Real-time surveillance of the airborne SARS-CoV-2 virus is a technological gap that has eluded the scientific community since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Offline air sampling techniques for SARS-CoV-2 detection suffer from longer turnaround times and require skilled labor. Here, we present a proof-of-concept pathogen Air Quality (pAQ) monitor for real-time (**5 min time** resolution) direct detection of SARS-CoV-2 aerosols. The system synergistically integrates a high flow (~1000 lpm) wet cyclone air sampler and a nanobody-based ultrasensitive micro-immunoelectrode biosensor. The wet cyclone showed comparable or better virus sampling performance than commercially available samplers. Laboratory experiments demonstrate a device sensitivity of 77–83% and a limit of detection of 7-35 viral RNA copies/m^3 of air. Our pAQ monitor is suited for point-of-need surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 variants in indoor environments and can be adapted for multiplexed detection of other respiratory pathogens of interest. Widespread adoption of such technology could assist public health officials with implementing rapid disease control measures.

# What Are the Odds of a Truly Catastrophic, Even Extinction-Causing, Disaster?

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230709-what-are-the-odds-of-a-truly-catastrophic-even-extinctioncausing-disaster

July 09 – On Monday, 10 July, the Forecastong Research Institute (FRI)has released Forecasting Existential Risks: Evidence from a Long-Run Forecasting Tournament, which describes the results of the Existential-Risk Persuasion Tournament (XPT).

The XPT, which ran from June through October of 2022, brought together forecasters from two groups with distinctive claims to knowledge about humanity's future — experts in various domains relevant to existential risk, and "superforecasters" with a track record of predictive accuracy over short time horizons. We asked tournament participants to predict the likelihood of global risks related to nuclear weapon use, biorisks, and AI, along with dozens of other related, shorter-run forecasts.

Some major takeaways from the XPT include:

❖ The median domain expert predicted a 20 percent chance of catastrophe and a 6 percent chance of human extinction by 2100. The median superforecaster predicted a 9 percent chance of catastrophe and a 1 percent chance of extinction.

❖ Superforecasters predicted considerably lower chances of both catastrophe and extinction than did experts, but the disagreement between experts and superforecasters was not uniform across topics. Experts and superforecasters were furthest apart (in percentage point terms) on AI risk, and most similar on the risk of nuclear war.

❖ Predictions about risk were highly correlated across topics. For example, participants who gave higher risk estimates for AI also gave (on average) higher risk estimates for biorisks and nuclear weapon use.
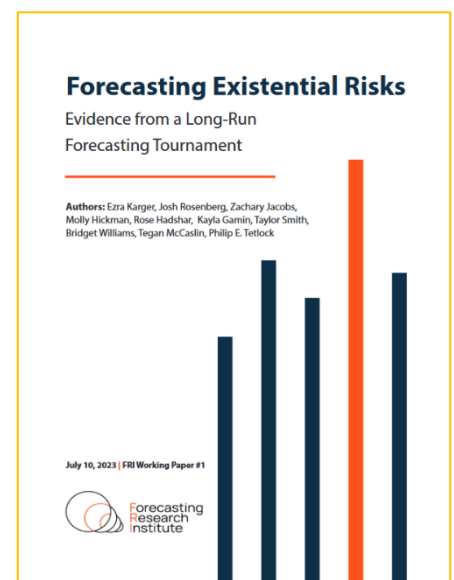
❖ Forecasters with higher "intersubjective accuracy"—i.e., those best at predicting the views of other participants—estimated lower probabilities of catastrophic and extinction risks from all sources.

❖ Few minds were changed during the XPT, even among the most active participants, and despite monetary incentives for persuading others.

FRI says it hopes that the XPT will not only inform our understanding of existential risks, but will also advance the science of forecasting by:

1. Collecting a large set of forecasts resolving on a long timescale, in a rigorous setting. This will allow us to measure correlations between short-run (2024), medium-run (2030) and longer-run (2050) accuracy in the coming decades.

2. Exploring the use of bonus payments for participants who both 1) produced persuasive rationales and 2) made accurate "intersubjective" forecasts (i.e., predictions of the predictions of other participants), which we are testing as early indicators of the reliability of long-range forecasts.

3. Encouraging experts and superforecasters to interact: to share knowledge, debate, and attempt to persuade each other. We plan to explore the value of these interactions in future work.

●► See the full working paper here.

People Who Don't Get COVID Symptoms Share a Common Feature

Source: https://www.sciencealert.com/people-who-dont-get-covid-symptoms-share-a-common-feature

July 20 – Nearly 7 million people have died from COVID-19 since the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus more than three years ago. And yet even after repeat infections, a number of individuals are yet to experience a single symptom after contracting SARS-CoV-2. A variant in an immune response gene may explain why, paving the way for more effective vaccines and treatments.

Global research led by the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) found one in five people who were asymptomatic following an infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus carried the **gene variant *HLA-B*15:01*.**

In addition, UCSF neurologist Jill Hollenbach and colleagues found people with *HLA-B*15:01* who had never been infected with the virus had immune cells that reacted to SARS-CoV-2 protein fragments, suggesting immunity developed after exposure to other infections.

Research suggests at least 20 percent of SARS-CoV-2 infections are asymptomatic, so learning more about this could help scientists in the fight against the disease that continues to take lives around the world.

"Most global efforts have focused on severe illness in COVID-19," Hollenbach and the team write in their published paper.

"Examining asymptomatic infection provides a unique opportunity to consider early immunological features that promote rapid viral clearance."

Human leukocyte antigen (HLA) genes produce immune system-supporting proteins, and some HLA molecules are found on cell surfaces. They name and shame foreign invaders, for instance viruses, presenting miniature fragments to help immune cells like 'killer' T cells recognize and fight infection or disease.

"If you have an army that's able to recognize the enemy early, that's a huge advantage," Hollenbach says; "it's like having soldiers that are prepared for battle and already know what to look for and can tell by the uniform that these are the bad guys."

The researchers examined genetic data collected previously from 29,947 registered bone marrow donors, to see if HLA variation might predispose people to asymptomatic infection with SARS-CoV-2. The COVID-19 data came from a voluntary smartphone-based program that these donors participated in, tracking infection, symptoms, and outcomes.

There were 1,428 unvaccinated donors who reported testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, and of those, 136 said they had no symptoms. One hint at a genetic connection was the discovery that 20 percent of these infected but asymptomatic donors carried at least one copy of the *HLA-B*15:01* gene, compared to 9 percent of infected people who developed symptoms.

Having one copy of the protective *HLA-B*15:01* variant doubled a person's likelihood of being symptom-free when infected with COVID-19, and someone with two copies was eight times more likely to show no symptoms.

"Asymptomatic people might enable us to identify new ways of promoting protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection," says biochemist Stephanie Gras from La Trobe University in Australia, "by mimicking this immune 'shield' observed in individuals that can dodge COVID-19."

Further analysis found T cells from people with *HLA-B*15:01* who had never been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 (from blood donations collected prior to the pandemic), had a strong immune response to SARS-CoV-2 protein fragments.
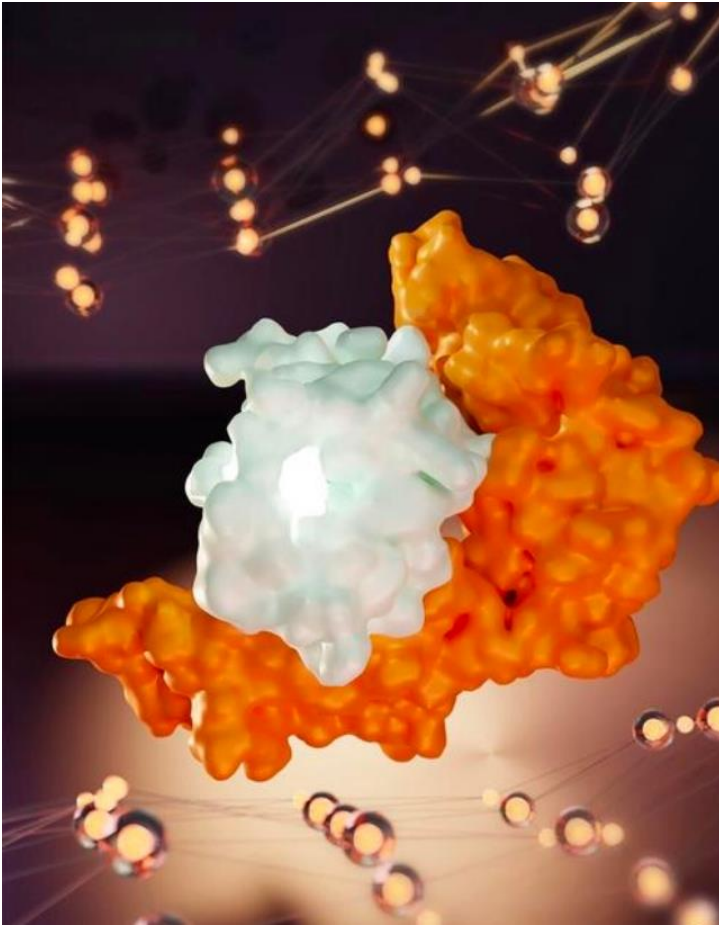
These fragments shared genetic sequences with other seasonal coronaviruses that cause the common cold. Their T cells could recognize various COVID-19 variants, including Omicron variants.

"So, even if the bad guys changed the uniform, the army would still be able to identify them by their boots or maybe a tattoo on their arms," explains University of North Carolina immunologist Danillo Augusto.

"That is how our immunological memory works to keep us healthy."

Illustration of a fragment of SARS-CoV-2 spike protein (white) that the virus uses to enter cells, bound to HLA-B*15:01 (orange). (André Luiz Lourenço)

The study has limitations; symptoms were self-reported, and the analysis only included individuals who self-identified as White. The *HLA-B*15:01* gene variant is quite frequent, appearing in about 10 percent of Europeans, but it may be less common in other populations, so larger and broader studies could provide more reliable conclusions.

Nonetheless, these significant findings could lead to ways to manage this still devastating disease.

"Our results have important implications for understanding early infection and the mechanism underlying early viral clearance," the team writes, "and may lay the groundwork for refinement of vaccine development and therapeutic options in early disease."

●▶ **The peer-reviewed research has been published in** *Nature*.

Scent Dogs Can Detect COVID-19 More Rapidly, Accurately Than Current Tests

Source: https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230721-scent-dogs-can-detect-covid19-more-rapidly-accurately-than-current-tests

July 21 – Scent dogs may represent a cheaper, faster and more effective way to detect COVID-19, and could be a key tool in future pandemics, a new review of recent research suggests. The review, published in the *Journal of Osteopathic Medicine*, found that scent dogs are as effective, or even more effective, than conventional COVID-19 tests such as RT-PCR.

Dogs possess up to 300 million olfactory cells, compared to just 5 or 6 million in humans, and use one-third of their brains to process scent information, compared with just 5% for humans. Dogs trained to recognize specific volatile organic compounds created in the body during disease have successfully identified patients with certain cancers, Parkinson's and diabetes.

Prof. Tommy Dickey of the University of California, Santa Barbara and Heather Junqueira of BioScent Detection Dogs reviewed 29 studies where dogs were used to detect COVID-19. The studies were performed using over 31,000 samples by over 400 scientists from more than 30 countries using 19 different dog breeds. In some studies, the scent dogs sniffed people directly, sometimes in public places as a health screening. In others, the dogs sniffed patient samples such as sweat, saliva or urine samples.

In the majority of studies, the scent dogs demonstrated similar or better sensitivity and specificity than the current gold-standard RT-PCR tests or antigen tests. In one study, four of the dogs could detect the equivalent of less than 2.6×10^{-12} copies of viral RNA per milliliter. This is equivalent to detecting one drop of any odorous substance dissolved in ten and a half Olympic-sized swimming pools and is three orders of magnitude better than modern scientific instruments.

The dogs could detect COVID-19 in symptomatic, pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic patients, along with new COVID variants and even long COVID. A major benefit of using the dogs was their speed—they could provide a result in seconds to minutes, and did not require expensive lab equipment or create mountains of plastic waste, unlike conventional diagnostic approaches.

"Although many people have heard about the exceptional abilities of dogs to help humans, their value to the medical field has been considered fascinating, but not ready for real-world medical use," said Prof. Dickey. "Having conducted this review, we believe that scent dogs deserve their place as a serious diagnostic methodology that could be particularly useful during pandemics, potentially as part of rapid health screenings in public spaces. We are confident that scent dogs will be useful in detecting a wide variety of diseases in the future."

Prof. Dickey and Heather Junqueira added that they feel that the impressive international COVID scent dog research described in their paper, perhaps for the first time, demonstrates that medical scent dogs are ready for mainstream medical applications.

Biological warfare expert warns tourists to 'never get in a pool in Las Vegas'

Source: https://www.ladbible.com/news/science/las-vegas-swimming-pools-dirty-088255-20230722

July 22 – It's well and truly holiday season, and for some lucky lot it's time for Vegas, baby.

And it's not just a trip of blackjack, poker and slot machines but typically, pool parties at fancy hotels in the sun.

However, a biological warfare specialist is warning tourists to stay away from the water in Las Vegas pools.

Dan Kaszeta was once a chemical Officer in the US army. In his career, he's worked with the Pentagon on chemical and biological proliferation issues and has a lot of history in research for the US' decommissioned chemical and biological weapons programs to training on live nerve agents.

His Twitter bio literally reads 'King of Nerve Agent Twitter' so basically, he's the exact kinda science guy you'd listen to on stuff like this.

He claimed in a previous tweet: "As a specialist in chemical and biological warfare, take this warning from me. Never get in a pool in Las Vegas. Don't even touch the water."

Obviously, he ruffled the feathers of the Sin City pool lover lot, so shared some rather unsettling details to explain why.

Explaining when he was 'the chemical and biological terrorism guy at the White House Military Office' in the late 90s, he claims he was called up to help a guy from 'another Federal agency'.

He says the request went something like this: "Dan, ya gotta help me. I'm working this case in Vegas. It's probably nothing but it could be a bio thing. But I need access to a lab that can keep this on the downlow until we know what the deal is."

Some of the 'control samples' included tap water and some swimming pool water from a 'major hotel'. And in a turn not expected from the research, the 'suspicious liquid' that had kicked off the actual investigation was 'relatively harmless'.

But Kaszeta continued: "The sample that had one of the finest labs in the country alarmed so much was, erm, the control sample from the pool water. It was, to use a technical phrase 'a shop of horrors'.

"So, I asked the good scientists what was in this sample. They said it was easier to say what WASN'T in the sample."

Turns out the pool water contained a 'soup of' things Kaszeta didn't even know existed as well as: "Alarming levels of Giardia and Cryptosporidium, both highly resistant to chlorine. A huge number of metabolites from human urine. Fecal matter, human, mammal, and avian. Trace amounts of cocaine, ketamine, and several different opiates.

"Adenoviruses. A weak immunochromatographic hit for Tularemia (not conclusive). Campylobacter."

They ended up testing other pool waters and the Potomac River water 'was safer'.

Basically, the lesson is that while chlorination kills some things, it doesn't kill everything.

What happens in Vegas, stays in the pool water.

Really this problem could just be with swimming pools in general – not just in Las Vegas.

But also, the majority of people who use them don't get sick. So probably just don't go around ingesting a load of the water.

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